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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this book is to provide the female inmate with a self-help guidebook that she can identify with and utilize in surviving the correctional experience. The publication contains 30 essays, poems, observations, diary excerpts, and drawings reflecting the life of female prison inmates at the Eddie Warrior Correctional Center in Oklahoma. Some of the essays are written by the supervisor of education at the center and other teachers, but most of the items are written by inmates and those who have been released recently. The essays focus on what female prisoners need to do to reclaim their lives outside the prison walls and how difficult that is to do, partially because the correctional system makes it harder than necessary for them to do so. Personal examples and anecdotes fill the articles and provide insight into the daily lives and aspirations of female inmates. Chapters are: (1) "Get a Life" (H. C. Davis); (2) "Fear" (Barbara Saunders); (3) "Anger" (Dorita Pemberton); (4) "Low Self-Esteem" (Keeva Clayton); and "The Powerless" (Leslie Smith). Following the chapters are two case studies: "Six Months in the Life of a Female Parolee" (Leah Mueller); and "Another Entry in the Journal of a Recovering Addict--May '96" (Michelle Pierre). (KC)

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# BEHIND & BEYOND THE WALLS:

# THE INCARCERATED FEMALE

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by
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Kimberlee A. Goody, editor & graphics artist

COLLECTION OF ESSAYS:

Dorita Pemberton, Writer
Keeva Clayton, Writer
Barbara Saunders, Writer
Leslie Smith, Writer
Leah Mueller, Contributor
Michelle Pierre, Contributor

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## The Incarcerated Female

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# Eddie Warrior Correctional Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-OPEN LETTER TO THE INCARCERATED
Date: April 6, 1998
Contact: Dr. H. C. Davis, Education Sup..
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## The Netherworld of Incarceration

Taft, OK—You are now entering the netherworld of incarceration. It is unlike anywhere else in the world. It is in the twilight zone of existence. It is the shadowy no-mans land found in the fairytale of "Alice in Wonderland," where nothing is as it should be. What used to be right in your life is now wrong and vice-versa.

The prison culture has a life of its own. Nothing is what it seems. Prison has its own behavior expectations and demands. A whole new language must be learned with complete new meaning for words and terms. For example, to "turn out" an inmate means to turn them sexually and out them as your woman or your man. This life bears no similarities to the real world or reality as we, the normal, ordinary, responsible people (NORP)[1] perceive it to be.

The incarcerated individual is forced into an operational level of 1 or 2 on Kohlberg's Moral development scale. Simply put, "might makes right and let the devil take the hindmost." It is a harsh, cruel, and often violent life that must be endured to

[1] Norp Think, Judge Challeen

survive the system intact. Your ability to function and grow in this environment will determine how successful you will be at staying out once you are released.

If you find yourself getting comfortable, then you'd better reassess your priorities. To accept the unreal world of incarceration and begin the process of "settling in" is dangerous, because it can easily become your new way of life. Your future vacation will be your short weeks or months on the outside and your vocation will become a series of incarcerations. Once you are in the system it is extremely hard to extricate yourself from the tentacles of the criminal justice system. Being on the inside looking out will become your world. This world is not one of freedom nor is it a world of total lockdown. It is the in between, "Netherworld of incarceration".

You are going to experience a way of life that you could never imagine and one in which people that have never experienced it, can neither identify with nor understand. Nor do they want to. This experience will test you in ways you will initially find frightening and disgusting. If you cannot habilitate or re-habilitate yourself while incarcerated, you are doomed. Your failure inside will guarantee your failure outside. Your strength of character will be tested to the extreme. You will either use your time, do time, or let time do you.[2] If you are a "Warped Norp"[3], which is a normal ordinary person that warped off and did something stupid, then you will naturally self correct and get involved in programs to re-habilitate yourself i.e. NA, AA, MRT etc. You will also get a job and relearn the meaning of responsibility, dependability, and the importance of following

---

[2] Map Through the Maze, Ned Rollo

[3] Norp Think, Judge Challeen

through on commitments. Your renewed sense of responsibilities toward your children or family will become a permanent goal in your life.

If however, you are of the "yardbird" type that never learned the meaning of responsibility, you are likely, if you're not careful, to "zone down" almost into the alpha state and become one of the eye-glazed walking dead that are seen so often inside prisons. The only time you come out of your stupor is when you think the Governor is going to sign an early release, or the legislature is considering new laws that may affect your release. Otherwise, you tune out and zone down to the netherworld.

The third strata of prison life I refer to as the yard dog. This individual lets time do them. They get misconducts, batteries on staff and inmates, and get sexually involved with staff and inmates. They will also get involved in drugs and contraband on the yard. Not only will they be active on the yard, they will either run or help enforce the rules and games on the yard.

Your future is very similar to Shakespeare's quote "To be or not to be, that is the question?" What are you going to be? The only way you will ever get out of the system and stay out is by growing your way out. Grow yourself spiritually, intellectually, culturally, and socially. If you zone down, drop-out, and get involved in yard games, then your yardbirdites will guarantee a life in the "Netherworld of Incarceration."

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# FORWARD

## "BEHIND THE WALLS"

by Dorita Pemberton

At the breaking of dawn, the sound of marching to cadences can be heard throughout the grounds of Eddie Warrior Correctional Center (E.W.C.C.) located 10 miles west of Muskogee in Taft, Oklahoma. This correctional facility for women is presently the residence for approximately 680 minimum security inmates, including the only regimented program in the state for first and second time female offenders. The correctional institution for women was established in 1989 on approximately 37 acres of land and was named in commemoration of Dr. Eddie Walter Warrior. However, the history of this location dates back many years prior. The land itself was a donation from farmers when, in 1909, the "Industrial Institute for the Deaf, Blind, and Orphans" was established. In 1917, the Training School for Negro Girls was erected. In 1961, the facility ownership was transferred from the Department of Institutions to the Department of Public Welfare. It became Taft Children's Center and was placed under the direction of L. E. Rader. In 1980, it was recognized as the Oklahoma Children's Center and served the community as such for the following six years. At that time, the Department of Corrections took over to facilitate a training center called the George Nigh Staff Development Center. The children were then either integrated back into society or dispensed to various group homes to accommodate the statewide training of correctional officers. The grounds of what is now the prison have under gone many changes over the years, as well as its governing bodies.

A staff member at E.W.C.C. recalls his childhood memories of an old canning plant at the children's home, sneaking peanuts that were farmed, and watching from a distance as the children tilled the earth with a team of horses. A few women that spent a considerable amount of their childhood in the home have now returned as inmates. Stories of the children and the events of years past are often rekindled at Eddie Warrior.

The institution is somewhat secluded in the foothills west of Muskogee with the Arkansas River located just northwest of the compound and wooded hillsides to the south. The facility area housing the women is surrounded by a 15 FT. chain link fence. Since it is the only minimum security facility located inside a rural residential area, the fence is utilized as much to keep farm animals out as it is to keep the women in.

Although there has been a great deal of new construction, some of the old buildings still remain. Eight dormitories at the northwest end of the facility form a semi-circle that house an estimated 100 women per dorm, with the exception of one presently designated for various meetings and offices.

The south side of the facility is where the gymnasium and the visiting area are located. Though the gym has been standing for many years, the inside has been renovated. Exercise equipment was installed, and recreational activities are provided for everyone. Family visiting and picnicking is permitted on weekends and holidays, where a small playground structure provides entertainment for the children.

In the center of the compound is a dining hall that has served the population for 80 years. A new dining hall is now nearing completion and will be in use shortly. There is also an attractive floral and greenery display seen around the Building Maintenance Vo-Tech building and a greenhouse that is utilized for the growth and nurturing of the facilities plants and beautification of the compound. Adjacent to that is a swimming pool and pool house that was in use during the operation of the children's home, but now remains empty.

Toward the east side of the compound, there is a maintenance shop and garage that services the institution, a small canteen area, and a beauty shop to meet the needs of the women. There is another recently constructed Vo-Tech building that houses the Electronics program's equipment. The Programs Building, which contains the Education Department, auditorium, Leisure Library, Law Library, and Records Office, was erected in the Rader era.

The Education Department offers classes in Literacy, Adult Basic Education, GED, and Daily Living Skills. Other educational opportunities are also accessible through Roger's State College of Claremore and Connors State College of Muskogee. Building Maintenance, Construction Support Technology, and Electronics are available through the Vo-Tech program. All new arrivals, unless they are seen by the medical staff on compound and acquire documentation releasing them from duties, are required to either work or attend school. Job assignments on the compound vary. Food service, auto mechanics, lawn maintenance, tutoring, beauty operators, business office assistants, library assistants, janitorial or orderly duties, caring for the canines, seamstress, and working for the facility newspaper are just a few of the jobs available. The majority of these assignments are during normal working hours. However, some differ ranging from 3:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M.

For a select few of the women, job sites are "off" compound, working in the community. Each weekday, under the Prisoners Public Work Program (P.P.W.P.), six crews of women are transported by officers to do a variety of community service work in the northeast region of Oklahoma. One crew is taken to the Board of Education in Okmulgee while another is taken to Bacone College in Muskogee. Both perform maintenance tasks and secretarial services. Also in Muskogee, the W.I.S.H. (Women In Safe Homes) crew assists in the office of a

battered women's shelter and another crew helps where they are needed at the animal shelter. Two more crews are transported, one to Tenkiller and one to Tulsa's Turner Turnpike, for the purpose of cleaning up the areas. These crews lend their services in everything from picking up litter to clearing wooded acreage.

When the evening falls on E.W.C.C. and the majority of women are returning to their dorms, the F.O.R.T. (Female Offender Regimented Treatment) trainees still march with a display of discipline and pride after a day of rigorous exercising and other activities. Their voices, with a high level of energy, transcend above all else as they recite cadences under the direction of a drill instructor.

The regimented program was instituted at Dr. Eddie Warrior in 1991 for female offenders serving a sentence of five years or less. It takes a minimum of 90 days to complete the F.O.R.T. program. It involves segregated housing, strict daily scheduling, and restrictions on personal property and work assignments. The emphasis of this program is to provide structure and identify needs, as well as provide intensive chemical abuse treatment and education. The format of the treatment is designed to direct the inmate's energy toward positive activities which will be beneficial to the community and the individual.

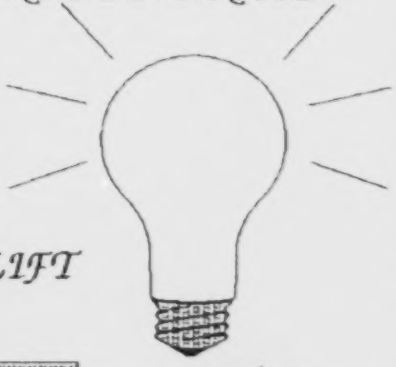
The majority of Eddie Warrior's women work diligently through special programs, counseling, and education to improve themselves, their family relationships, and their standing in the community. I, personally, first became aware of the procedures and the programs available at E.W.C.C. when I was incarcerated here in 1992. I entered this institution with a background of broken marriages, a loss of children, spousal abuse, sexual abuse, alcoholism, and drug addiction. I entered this institution not only bound at my hands and feet, but in my heart and mind. I am aware of the positive and the negative effects resulting from incarceration. I will often be reminded of the misfortunes and mistakes in my past, as will each of us. If we choose to remain focused on our disappointments, plagued by feelings of unworthiness, fear, and remorse, we become stagnant and trapped in a prison of our own making. If we seek to increase our knowledge about the dysfunction in our lives, and in turn, become willing to challenge those discoveries with a new found courage and truth, we begin to realize that freedom is more a state of mind than a state of being.

In the midst of our dormitories, a small monument reminds us each day that hope is alive. It states, "Honor and shame from no condition rise. Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

# OUR MISSION

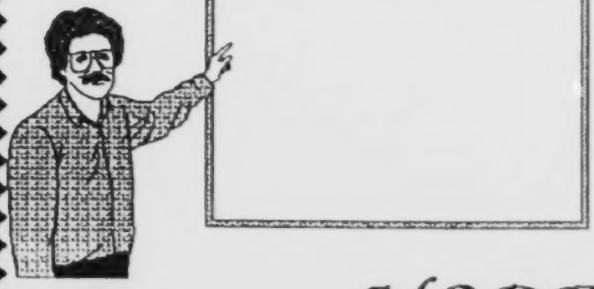
TO EDUCATE
NOT DENIGRATE

TO INITIATE
NOT DOMINATE



TO SHOW PROGRESSION
NOT REGRESSION

TO BE AN AGENT OF UPLIFT
NOT PUT DOWN



TO TEACH BY MODELING!!!!!

# The Nature of This Flower is to Bloom.

-Alice Walker

# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to provide the female inmate with a self help guidebook that she can identify with and utilize in surviving the correctional experience. All newly incarcerated females experience the alienation that stems from fear, anger, prison sexual mores, and low self-esteem. How you handle these problems will be the measure of your success while incarcerated. Growth is the key to successfully dealing with your alienation. You must grow yourself intellectually, socially, physically, and culturally. To accomplish this in the barren setting of prison life will be a major achievement. It will not be easy, but it is possible. There are many opportunities for growing while being incarcerated. Pursue the opportunity and seize the day.

This book is designed to enlighten, instruct, and encourage female offenders and their families as they struggle through the processes and procedures of the American criminal justice system.

The following documentation is an account of the concerns, needs, and the fears communicated by women offenders. We will address the emotional roller coaster one experiences after incarceration. Our purpose is to provide the reader with a practical tool when faced with situations and tasks that would somehow threaten to rob them of their sense of security and optimism for the future. It is not easy when one finds oneself caught up in circumstances that are completely beyond their control, or placed in conditions that are totally unfamiliar. From the arrest to the release and beyond, there is a daily struggle that will sometimes seem like an uphill climb with very little hope of over-coming. There is no simple solution, but often, there is great success.

This book can offer insight to improve your peace of mind and welfare. However, it will take a commitment to a stated goal. This work exposes the heroine experiences and the hideous reality of doing time. It deals with issues of the institutional individual, their helplessness, homosexuality, addiction, emotional withdrawal, isolation, depression, anger, hostility, health problems, and alienation. These subjects are raw and disturbing, especially when they are affecting you or someone you care for. There is a middle ground between the sometimes fearful acceptance of incarceration and living each day with bitter resentment and hate.

As you search these pages and yourself, look for that balance with a confident assurance. Hundreds of women like you have found a way to live happier and more productive lives behind and beyond the walls.

by Dr H C Davis

# AMERICA'S THROWAWAY CHILDREN
# THEIR LAST CHANCE FOR EDUCATION:

I. ⅔ OF INMATES ARE FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE

II. CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION CUTBACKS
- A. Pell rescinded 1993
- B. ½ of states have reduced funding
- C. Most states enroll between ¼ & ½ in education
  - High ➡ Kentucky - 86%
  - Low ➡ Nebraska - 7%
  - Oklahoma ➡ 7,700 of 17,000 = 45%
- D. Required correctional education participation
  1. 21 states - if less than 8th grade level
  2. all federal prisons - if less than GED level
  3. most states offer incentives to enroll
  4. Okla. does NOT require participation...does offer incentives
- E. Prison population areas of deficiency
  1. literacy
  2. skills to comprehend news articles, warranties
  3. skills to understand maps, schedules, & payroll forms
  4. ability to balance a checkbook or figure a tip
  5. ⅔ of inmates are in lowest 2 of the 5 skill areas, ½ of Americans are in top 3 levels
  6. 40% of inmates cannot calculate the costs of a purchase

III. PRISON POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS
- A. Tripled since 1980
- B. Soon there will be more people in prison than in 4 year colleges
- C. Support for Correctional Education is dwindling
- D. Many voters & politicians are more interested in the punitive role of incarceration rather than its potential for rehabilitation

IV. CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION EXPENDITURES
- A. Less in 93-94
- B. NY spent $50 M 93-94
- C. Texas spent $40.7 M 93-94
- D. Minn. spent $2000 per inmate
  - Most states spend less than half this amount.
  - Oklahoma: Avg. per inmate enrolled ➡ $700
- E. Education is the last chance for many
- F. Recidivism is reduced
- G. Employment opportunities increased

V. QUESTION FOR NORP'S:
Habilitate, Re-habilitate, or Warehouse?

SOURCES: N. Y. TIMES, March 17, 1996
Educational Testing Service
Statistics of Federal Department of Education

# "WHITE TIME"

Little Baby Buntin',
Daddy's gone a-huntin'

Looking for the little girls
And mommy said it's nothin'.

Let the razor take you deep, beyond its fatal edge
To life and times of nursery rhymes that dance inside your head.

Cry baby, cry baby, stick a needle in your eye, baby
But don't you tell your mommy it was I, baby.

Hold my hand and do-se-do, and we'll be on our way
Now over the moon, it ends real soon, but only for today.

Hush little baby, don't say a word
No one will believe what you say you heard.

As time goes by and you grow up, you'll remember me
We danced together in the dark where nobody else could see.

I wish I may, I wish I might, wish upon a star tonight
Take mommy's scissors from the drawer and leave you dying on the floor.

Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top
He pushed on her head and she begged him to stop.

A pretty little girl, though I never really knew you
I only wed your mommy 'cause I knew someday I'd screw you.

All the kings horses, and all the kings men
Couldn't put Humpty together again

But you'll go running back, with razors cutting through the air
Just to pick up all the pieces, but we neither one will care

It's raining, it's pouring, the old man is snoring
Mommy's closed the door and let her baby go a-whoring.

This poem was written by Dorita Pemberton during her incarceration in 1991 in the Rogers County Jail.



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# THE MIND OF THE INMATE

"The Mind of the Inmate" is taken from a speech given by Dr. Robert M. Lindner before the Maryland State Legislature on July 19, 1957.

Despite all our petty speech-making, imprisonment is, and always will be, punishment for the people who have to undergo the experience. We can talk about deterrence and re-education, but retribution is what is really accomplished. Moreover, we would all like to think the individual inmate spends their time in confinement meditating upon their crime, regretting what they have done, and formulating new and basic resolutions about the future. This would be very nice for all of us, but it simply is not so. Almost anything that happens to a man or woman while in prison, from the moment the offender is turned over to the guard at the prison gate, to the moment they leave by that same gate, they live as if in a dream. Contrary to the belief of most people, there is no urgency of time, nor feeling of its passage. The prisoners go through each day only half-aware of where they are, and the only things which penetrate the mist of unreality are crucial things such as parole hearings or visits. Other more realistically oriented contacts similar to those they left behind in the free world will also serve to bring them to a full awareness. From the point of view of the prison administration, this half-life is a good thing; for the more they behave like an automaton, the better prisoners they are. That is, the less trouble they are likely to cause.

But, at the same time, their dream-like suspended state is one of the greatest reasons why the effect of prisons and imprisonment is so alike, and why it makes for so many repeaters. It is also why those of us who have to explore the minds of criminals feel that the bright machine shops, the gardens, and the schools, which are all aspects of modern institutional programs, are but boredom relievers, and indeed, have little or no effect on the prisoners themselves. In addition to the dream state, imprisonment encourages people to function on lower physical and psychological levels. Most prisoners, no matter how intelligent they may be, return to a condition resembling infancy. Then consider the fact that by imprisonment an individual is deprived of all those qualities associated with manhood or adulthood--their loss of where to go and what to do. In other words, we virtually make them a child again. And then, so inconsistent in our thinking are we that we demand from them the behavior of an adult and, more than this, after we break them by what is called "discipline," after we pound

them into submission (psychologically, of course), and accustom them to being completely dependent, we release them to the world and require that they act and function as a mature adult. We need to wonder who is more in need of help (or rehabilitation, if you prefer), the adult who has become childlike and dependent or the systemized authorities who have wrought this havoc. Many prisoners have found it impossible to continue endlessly the fiction of their lives behind walls. Many others sustain it, but make up for the emptiness of the days and the loneliness of the nights by indulging in extravagant fantasies usually concerned with an improbable future and distorted past. Some cannot maintain this fiction, and the dream state fails and falls apart. When this happens and dreadful reality is faced, the prisoners become flooded with emotions and thoughts they sometimes cannot handle. This is the time men and women blow their tops and become physically and mentally ill, or when they strike out against the environment and the people in it with blind rage and hot fury. Being in prison means being helpless in the absolute sense of the word. Things happen to you, you get pushed around by the whims of others and you can do nothing about your own circumstances. From the bars of your cell to the uniforms of the guards, everything says "NO" to you. And inside, your tensions mount with each denial and rejection. If you cannot, or do not, permit yourself to sink into the vast emptiness and apathy of the dream, you literally overflow with bitterness, hate, and passionate emotions. Inmates have to make a choice between a dream which will keep them sane and a reality which can drive them mad. It is a rare individual indeed who can walk out of those same gates, past that same guard, a better person than when they came in. And when they are successful in doing this, they accomplish it because of the fundamental inner resources they possess, and the power of the mind, spirit, and understanding they lay hold upon. And we know they do it not because of the prison to which they have been subjected, along with its therapy and talk of rehabilitation, but rather and pointedly so - in spite of it. But successful or not, imprisonment will inflict scars upon a man's soul which will be borne the rest of his days.

# CHAPTER ONE:

# GET A LIFE

by Dr. H. C. Davis

Your prison experience can be a positive or negative element in your life. One thing for sure, it will be what you make of it. Life is difficult and no one gets a free ride on the highway of life. The question is what will you do with the rest of your life? The answer lies totally within yourself and only you have the power to effect change.

Everyday for the rest of your incarceration, you will be faced with feelings of fear, rejection, and anger, and you may want to give up. You can take the time you've been given and use your time, do time, or let time do you. The old saying that "an idle mind is the devil's workshop" is especially true in prison. Your prime concern should be keeping your mind productively involved and begin the process of growing your way out of prison.

Being locked up is not living and bears no resemblance to reality. If you can learn to function in this unreal environment and regain your sanity, integrity, and self esteem, you can make it in the real world. However, if you settle in, get comfortable, and "do time", you will be back. The worst and most devastating thing you can do is to allow yourself to get involved in the yard games and let other inmates and hedonistic staff trick off your time. That is letting time do you. We had an inmate come in on a five year sentence and she ended up serving eight years because of her involvement in yard games, gang activity, batteries, and sexual misconducts. This is a prime example of letting time do you.

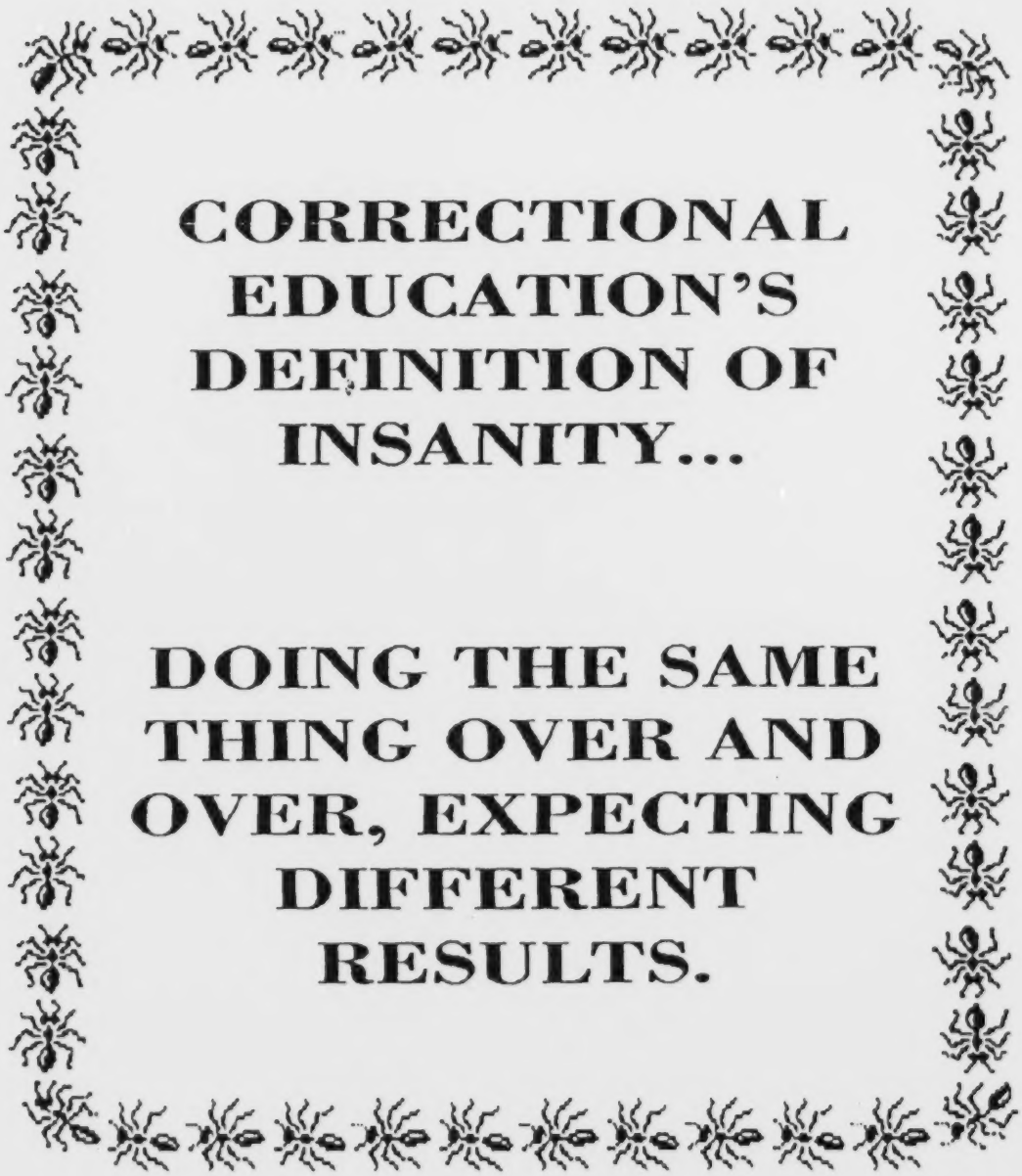
Resist all efforts by the yard bird population to involve you in their schemes and games. It can only be counter-productive to your overall mission and goals for your growth toward normalcy. Every person experiences several points and times in their life that can only be explained as an "existential moment" in which the decision that must be made will be a life altering determination. What you do at this existential moment is a major fork in your life's road and the path you choose will impact the rest of your life.

This point in time is very significant. The choices you make early on in your incarceration will forever determine whether the internal war you are considering to wage is worth the effort. Your value system will come into play and contribute to your decision.

These minor battles will be fought between the desire to fit in, be a part of, and your value system that cries out for purpose and self control. Never allow yourself to be controlled or used by other inmates. The state and staff may control your body, but you must fight to control your intellect and soul. This is ⅔

of the battle for sanity. Never place value in people who have no self-value.

Early in life, we learned about the 3 R's: Reading, 'Riting, & 'Rithmatic. To gain this self-control, one must investigate the 4TH R, which is Reason for Being. God has a plan for every individual; some are just late getting to work. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "I've spent my whole life up to now stringing my instrument. Now I'm ready to play." The rest of your life will be your tune. Will it harmonize and be enjoyable or is it going to be off key? The outcome is yours to choose. To paraphrase Ned Rollo, your past failures are not final, and remember, it's always too soon to quit. You <u>can</u> rise above your circumstances. Ask yourself as Admiral Stockdale did in the 1992 Presidential campaign, "Who am I, what am I doing here?" Define who you are. Establish your purpose, personal goals, and career goals. Visualize who, what, & where you want to be five years from now and set out to make it a reality. You've made mistakes, learn from them. In the words of President Harry S. Truman quoting Santayana, "He who fails to remember the mistakes of the past are destined to repeat them." Profit from your past mistakes. The definition of correctional insanity is "doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results." Reject this mindset and prepare to change and influence your future.



# CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION'S DEFINITION OF INSANITY...

# DOING THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER, EXPECTING DIFFERENT RESULTS.

# THE ESSENCE OF LIFE?

"To be truly present wherever you are, don't waste, abuse, or misuse your time while here on earth. It is a non-refundable product."

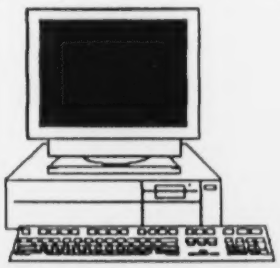
# IS YOUR VALUE SYSTEM FLAWED?

Your belief system is based on what you think. Every action and thought is a direct result of early programming that went into your value system. You are what you think. Your beliefs and values will effect your future potential, actions, and results. Your value system is an integral part of your success. If your value system is distorted, weak, or perverted, an overhaul may be called for.

The most important socializing agents in your life are your family, church, and school. If you have a good supportive family, attended a church that has engendered a good moral and ethical value system, and went to a school that has supplied you with the educational and social opportunities that give you confidence in yourself, then you probably aren't here. The fact that you are here tells me that you have a problem in one or two of these areas and quite possibly in all three. I call this my three-legged milking stool theory: Family, church, school.

Let's take the family first. Of these three, your family has been the most important socializing agent in your life. If you have a dysfunctional family, you are at risk. Without the support of a functioning family unit, the other two sometimes, more often than not, fall between the cracks. If you have a problem in two of these areas, the odds are that you will someday be imprisoned. A dysfunction in all three and you're here. You can either be an active participant in life or you can be a hitchhiker. If you prefer to be on the sidelines hitchhiking and thumb-sucking off someone else's security blanket, then you're in the right place. Between the state and accommodating female prisoners, you can go through the rest of your life with them as your enablers. Consider that you do not see life as it is, you view it as you are. Remember, you are what you think and you will be what you <u>will</u> yourself to be.

# 3
# PRIMARY AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION
## Your
## Disk Operating System
## (D.O.S.)



1. **FAMILY -** **Ethical Culture:**
   **right & wrong**
   **work ethic**

2. **CHURCH -** **Moral Culture:**
   **belief system**

3. **SCHOOL -** **Social Culture:**
   **knowledge/skills**

# LIFE'S OPTIONS

To sort out these problems and make sense of the choices you have, you must first logically and sequentially analyze your options. Instead of being ruled by your emotions and reacting to every decision impulsively, begin the process of using Bloom's taxonomy in problem solving. There are three words utilized in this process: metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. I know these words sound intimidating, but in reality, they are quite simple. All three deal with your truth and your reality.

Metaphysics is simply defined as "What is your truth?" or "What is your reality?" With all the data stored up in your mind, what do you perceive to be real and true? You cannot know the reality of anything without the knowledge of that thing, idea, or process. So, your truth is limited. When you have a limited education, which equates to limited knowledge, you tend to have tunnel vision when it comes to coping skills along the highway of life. Now remember that metaphysics simply refers to your perception of reality. Epistemology asks the question of "How do you know it is real?" What criteria have you used to validate your perception of reality and truth? The next question asked of you is axiology. Again, it is simply defined as "What are the consequences of this decision I'm going to make?"

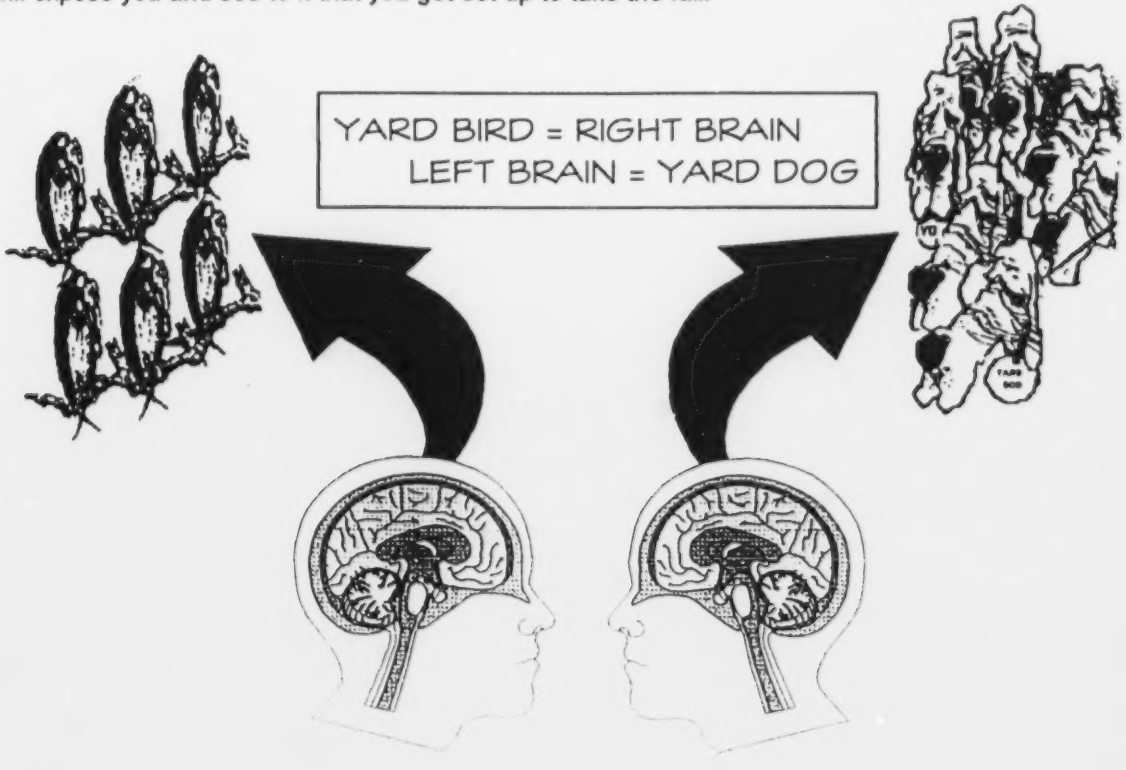
To review the process of problem solving, let us refer back: Metaphysically, "Is this decision right for me?"; Epistemologically, "How do I know it's right?"; and Axiologically, "If Murphy's Law kicks in, what is going to happen to me or what will be the ultimate result or consequence of this action?" If every inmate had gone through this process, I would dare say most of you would not be here.

Are you doing time,
or is time doing you?

## RIGHT BRAIN - LEFT BRAIN

Too often, people that become incarcerated are individuals that live on the edge and act impulsively without any thought being given to consequences. They are yard birds; if it feels good, they do it. They live for the moment. Yesterday is gone, tomorrow may not come, and today is where it's all happening. Their whole existence is tied up in the here and now, with little or no thought being given to how their actions will impact their family or children. These individuals are usually right-brained and make every decision from the affective domain of their personality. They are touchy-feely people that make their decisions based totally on the emotional experience of the moment. If you were to give these individuals the "Colors" personality test, they would be oranges or blues; and their crimes are usually petty, emotional, and impulsive.

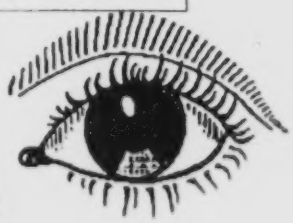
The other type of incarcerated female is the golds and greens. They are logical, sequenced, and very well organized in the crime they commit. These are left-brained people and exemplify the term "Con". They will construct and carry out some of the most intricate and dangerous games on the yard. Some of these types I refer to as "yard dogs". They are the manipulators and enforcers of the yard gangs. You should avoid these people as much as possible. Don't get pulled into their games, because if anything happens, it will be you that goes to RHU (lock), not them. They are too smart and devious to leave themselves exposed; but, they will expose you and see to it that you get set up to take the fall.

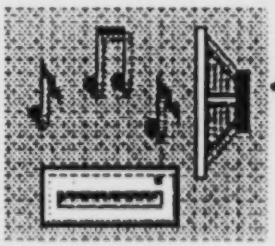


# INCARCERATED LEARNING STYLES

**Visual Learners -**

23% **of Population**





**Auditory Learners -**

10% **of Population**

**Kinesthetic -**

67% **of Population**

# COPING WITH CHANGE

One of your main concerns upon incarceration is to avoid the traps that will surely be set for you. In the words of Karen Kaiser Clark, "Life is change, growth is optional." The very definition of the ongoing process of life is change. What you do with and how you cope with change will determine your growth potential.

I look at the constant parade of women that come through this prison and I'm appalled at how many familiar faces I see every Monday morning in the inmate orientation session. "Why are they back?" I ask myself and, also, them when given the opportunity. I don't want to sound like I'm generalizing on an issue that deserves to be addressed with specific remediation programs, but we, the Department of Corrections, the state legislature, the governor, and the NORPS (Normal Ordinary Responsible People) of Oklahoma are not providing the inmates with the tools necessary to survive once released. The Department of Corrections is number and bed driven because of the lack of facilities; the legislature and governor are hemmed in by the process; and the NORPS want their pound of flesh in punishment, not coddling. You, the inmate, have become the disposable refuse of a society bent on retribution. Granted, you have brought this on by your foolish choices, but placing the blame does not solve the problem. The government will continue to fund your stay in prison, the Department of Corrections will make a limited effort in your rehabilitation, and the NORPS will continue to demand that you should be locked up and the key should be thrown away. No one is addressing the fact that, in many cases, rehabilitation is impossible.

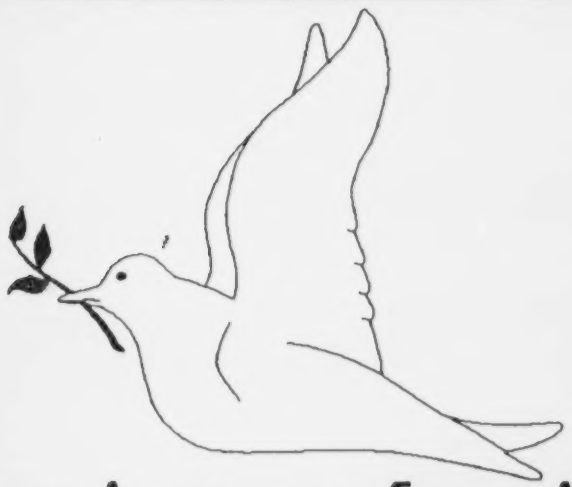
The definition of rehabilitation is to take you back to the good person you once were. How can you ever be taken to a place where you've never been? If your value system that operates your moral and ethical compass was flawed and distorted at an early age, then how can you go back to where you never were? Rehabilitation, in this instance, is an oxymoron. The proper term would be habilitate, and this is where society is failing to belly up to the bar. We offer free schooling to illegal aliens within our border and take away the Pell grant from our own children that are incarcerated. As Yogi Berra would say, "It's deja vu all over again." We, the NORPS, want you to get out and be a good law abiding citizen. Not! Without comprehensive habilitation programs, you will go out and come right back in.

So, the answer to your dilemma is you. You must repair the legs on your broken stool one leg at a time. Get in all the educational and Vo-Tech programs you can. Establish yourself in a religious outreach program that comes to your facility; and last of all, don't hang with the yard birds and yard dogs. Find a good moral person with whom you can talk and be friends without feeling obligated financially or sexually. They do exist, just be discriminating about the person or persons you choose to hang with.

I hear staff taking credit for how well this or that inmate is doing and how they've grown and matured into a really good person. I'm reminded of Judge Challeen's crowing rooster and his effect on the daily sunrise and his barking dog that keeps his front yard from becoming a crowded parking lot. We, as staff, have little or no part in the success of the inmate population. If you grow and mature, it will be a direct result of your efforts and yours alone. Take these accomplishments and savor them, for they truly belong to you and no one else. Take pride in every step of your growth as you progress toward your goal of being self-sufficient.

***NO EXCUSES - YOU HAVE THE TIME***

- Think back...Think hard;
- Find out what's broken;
- Systematically make the repairs;
- AND JUST DO IT!



**Success is not a function of what you start with materially, but what you start with spiritually.**

**--Herman Cain,**
**CEO Godfathers Pizza**

# ARE YOU A PERENNIAL ADOLESCENT?

There is a direct correlation between your educational success and maturity. You will recognize these changes in yourself as you gain knowledge and generate your successes from day to day. The three steps that will enable you to succeed are:

1. Learn from the mistakes of your past.
2. Accept the reality of the present.
3. Prepare to influence your future.

Too many times, the inmate will live in the world of "what if..?" or blaming others for their failure. In doing this, they only exacerbate the problem. You must take the mistakes in your past, learn from them, and then mentally dig a hole, put your past in, and cover it up. Say a prayer and be cognizant of the fact that you can't change a thing in your past, but you can influence what will happen to your future. After the funeral service for your misspent past, set about the task of making the repairs necessary to rebuild your three legged milking stool. You can and you must take charge of the rest of your life. If you don't, the state, or someone else, will. The choice, again, is yours.

The lack of values and ethics in our society has led to a breakdown in morality and, consequently, has contributed to the demise of the family unit, i.e. dysfunctional parents produce dysfunctional children. It is an ever widening circle of immorality, perversion, drugs, and crime. You cannot change the family unit that produced you. However, you can impact and change the family you control or become a part of.

How do you learn right from wrong when you come from a dysfunctional family that seldom took you to church and didn't really care whether you went to school or not? The answer to this is "with great difficulty". Your habilitation will be a slow and sometimes very emotional path that will appear, at times, an insurmountable task. You will be delving into a part of your psyche that you have either suppressed or totally submerged. To pull these feelings out and confront them will be upsetting and set you on an emotional roller coaster. Some inmates are unable to sustain the process and give up and just "do their time". This is a cop-out and when this person reaches the streets they will be unable to cope, thereby completing the round trip ticket to prison. Their previous inaction assured themselves of this return when they had given up in their prior incarceration.

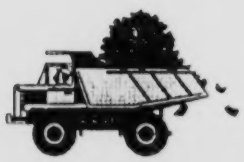
**You can only be betrayed by someone you trust.**

**--Dr. H. C. Davis**

# WARNING: YOU ARE AT RISK.
# YOU ARE IN THE DANGER ZONE.

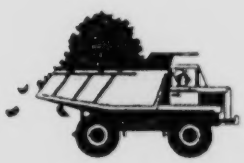
What causes a breakdown in value systems? When does accommodation and tolerance become acceptance? Why are standards of morality that were deemed unacceptable when we were young, now not only considered acceptable, but normal? Things that used to be illegal or immoral are now being touted as normal behavior, and besides, "people are going to do it anyway; why not legalize it?" This mindset regarding abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia, and pedophilia borders on insanity. These acts attack the very fabric of the family unit and trivialize morality. I know people will always participate in deviancy, but society and you must never condone nor accept these practices as normal.

I've previously stated that "you are what you think". Your words are spoken thoughts and these thoughts are insights into your soul. Your actions will be a direct result of either impulsive thoughts or logically processed ideas. Now with this in mind, I would like for you to consider that if you fill your mind with perversity, the product and action of that mind will be perverse. It's really very simple; garbage in, garbage out. If you repeatedly associate with and actively participate in illegal, immoral, and perverse acts, your conscience will become seared and, according to Romans 1:28, you will be given over to a reprobate mind. Literally speaking, that which you once knew to be wrong has now become acceptable and your conscience doesn't even bother you anymore.



GARBAGE IN . . .

. . . GARBAGE OUT



# ROMANS

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
23 And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image
made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts,
and creeping things.
24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts
of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:
25 who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the
creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.
26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women
did change their natural use into that which is against nature:
27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned
in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which unseemly,
and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.
28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them
over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;
29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness,
covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit,
malignity', whisperers,
30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of
evil things, disobedient to parents,
31 Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection,
implacable, unmerciful:
32 Who knowing the judgement of God, that they which commit such
things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure
in them that do them.

To Be,

Or

Not To Be

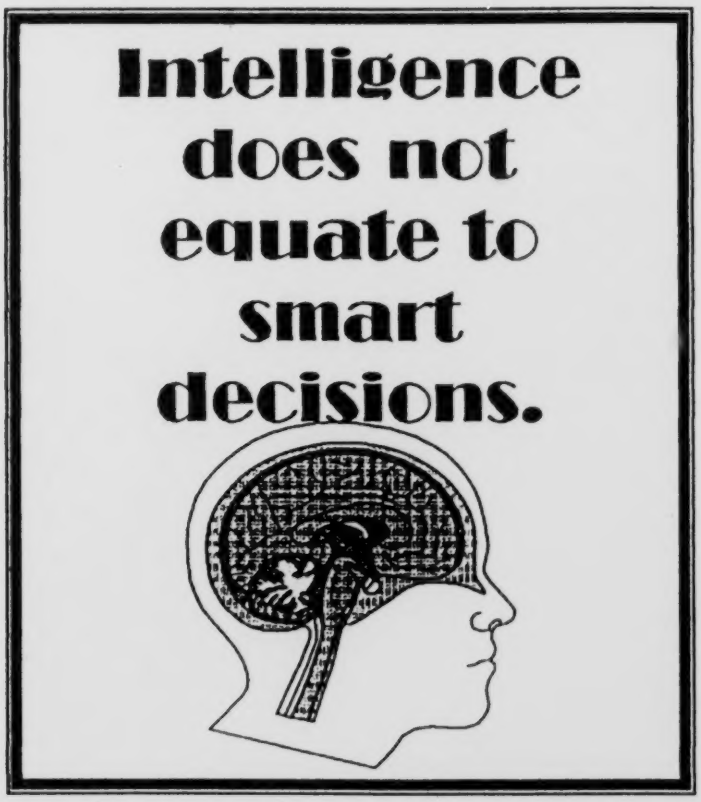
That Is The Question

"Hamlet"

Shakespeare

# TO BE OR NOT TO BE?
# THAT IS THE QUESTION...

The path you follow in prison will be a very strong indicator of the type of person you will be upon release. The female inmates role while incarcerated is in many ways the exact opposite of that in the male prison. The female has an innate desire to belong with a need for relationships and will be more susceptible to the fear, intimidation, and homosexual overtures of their prison counterparts. Many female inmates have never been responsible for themselves.

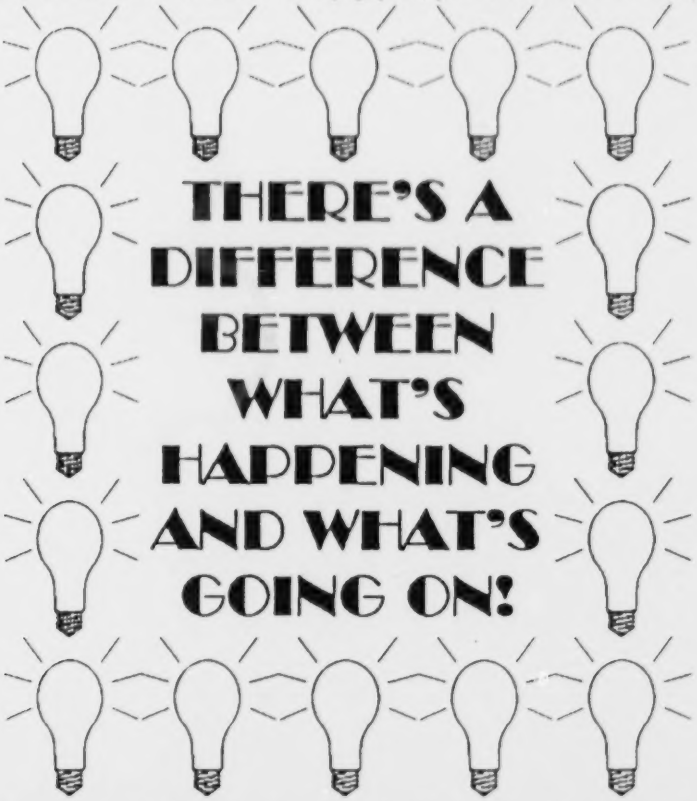



Their parents were their enablers growing up, their husbands took over as an enabler in the marriage, and now, the state has become the enabler. With this record of requiring an enabler to exist, it is no wonder that 85% of the female inmates will participate, at least once, with homosexuality after incarceration, and 65% will remain active for the rest of their incarceration. Out of this 65%, only 35% will go straight once released. So it becomes self-evident that being responsible for oneself is imperative for the successful transition from prison to the streets.

# 7 STEPS TO TRUTH

1. Education is the process of moving one from opinion to knowledge
2. Learning is the pursuit of knowledge
3. The acquisition of knowledge must be a personal quest
4. Knowledge begins with the recognition of the absence thereof
5. Knowledge is the process of seeking truth
6. The value of truth is the discovery of knowledge
7. Knowledge is truth

The key to growing while in prison and to continue the process when released is the desire one has for knowledge. My favorite saying is "knowledge begins with the recognition of the absence thereof." Simply put, you don't know that you don't know




until someone enlightens you to the reality of your ignorance. Once enlightened, the more knowledge you gain will bring with it the realization of just how much you don't know. I was driving my grandson, Nathan, home from school one day and he said, "Papu, you have a doctor's degree, don't you?" I replied that I did, and he went on to say, "Isn't a doctor's degree the highest degree you can get?" I again replied in the affirmative. He then said, "Then you know everything there is to know." My answer to this child that was 8 years old at the time puzzled him, but I'm sure he'll figure it out in time. My response was, "Nate, I don't know more now then I ever didn't know before." Now just a few weeks later, I had brought him out to the prison to work with me and I always send him upstairs to Mr. Murphy's computer lab to take a test and work with some of the inmate tutors. Apparently, because of his computer skill, he had convinced several of them that he was a veritable genius. They'd bragged on him so much that his head was all puffed up with the praise he'd received from the inmate students and tutors. On the way home, he was all reared back in his seat and he said, "You know, Papu, I'm pretty smart." I looked at him and I said, "No, Nathan, you are not smart, you are very intelligent; but you are not yet smart." I continued on with, "There are a lot of intelligent people that make stupid and dumb decisions. Smart people make smart decisions. You'll understand this when you grow up." I could tell that Nate was really thinking it over. He didn't utter another word the rest of the trip home. The next day was Saturday and I was out mowing the lawn and Nate came riding up on his bike and he said,

# SOCIALIZATION CONCEPTS

**PRIMARY YEARS - 2 TO 5 YEARS OF AGE**

**ALL VALUE SYSTEM IN PLACE BY AGE 7**

**65% OF BLACK CHILDREN RESIDE IN SINGLE PARENT HOMES.**

**35% OF WHITE CHILDREN RESIDE IN SINGLE PARENT HOMES.**

## WE HAVE A DELIQUENT PARENTS PROBLEM, NOT A DELIQUENCY PROBLEM

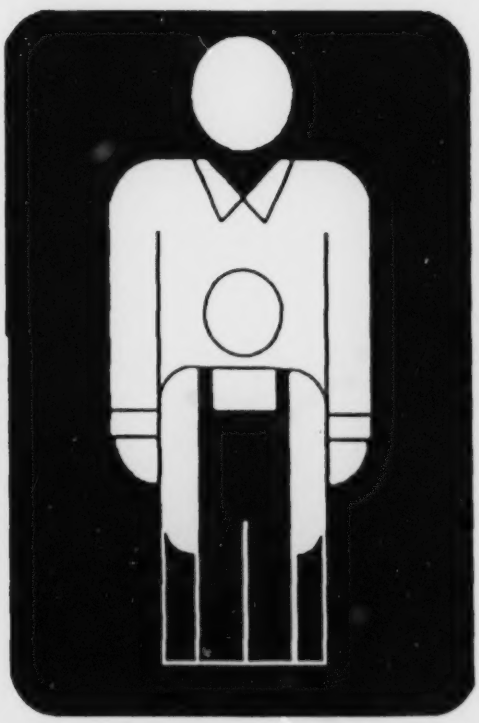
"You know, Papu, I've got it all figured out," and I said, "Oh, what do you have all figured out?" He hesitated a moment and looked at me with that very serious expression in his eyes and said, "Well, I think I'm about half smart because I do make some good decisions, don't I?" I could hardly control my laughter as I said, "Yes, Nate, you do make some good decisions and I think you have figured it out." Now this may seem a little funny, but too often, the female inmates are intellectually immature. They may be in their 30's, 40's, or 50's, but many are still going on about 14 or 15. I call them perennial adolescents that have not yet grown up.

Just remember that knowledge levels all playing fields and that once you have the knowledge of truth, you, indeed, have power. Visualize yourself as a winner, never a loser. A winner may be beaten in some of life's encounters, but she is never defeated. Defeat is a state of mind that losers wallow in. If you want to claim victimhood for yourself and go through the rest of your life saying "Woe is me," then so be it, but don't expect the world to applaud your defeat. Take charge of your life and get a life. The next few chapters have been written by inmates that have collaborated with me in the writing, production, and editing of this book. I chose the subject or subjects for each of them according to their relationship with these problems and how they dealt with or were dealing with them. I think you will find their contribution to be both informative and insightful. So tighten your seatbelts and let's get started.

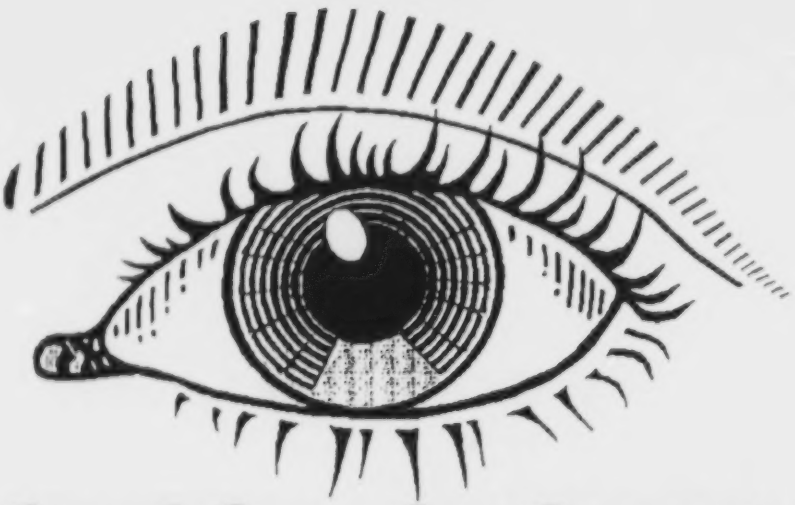
There is an

*"Inner Child"*

In all of us.



**There are two ways you can live your life:**



1. **looking in front of you**
2. **looking over your shoulder**

# PUZZLE OF LIFE

How can we get people to change themselves?

If they want to change, what can we do to help?

If our current system is not working, how can we motivate them to change themselves?

To put a puzzle together, they need the big picture.

They need a glimpse of where he/she is going.

What if we give him a false picture?

# CHAPTER TWO: FEAR

by Barbara Saunders

Fear: What is it, where does it come from, what can we do about it?

After I had been incarcerated over two years, someone asked me, "What did you think prison would be like?" And I responded, "I never thought about it."

I guess when I was "in county" I didn't believe I would go to prison. Then, in Lexington Assessment and Reception I wrote a poem, part of which said:

Women come to prison
One of two ways,
Eyes knowing and hard
Eyes dull and glazed.

At Lexington, I was terrified that this WAS prison: the walls, the razor wire, the towers, the cells with two metal bunks, no ventilation, a toilet/sink, and doors that clanged shut and were subject to open only at meals and shower time. I knew then if this was the way my life was going to be for the duration of my sentence, I would surely go crazy or kill myself at the first opportunity.

During the assessment process, I was referred to the psychologist there and then to the psychologist where I would be going. My casemanager wrote on my assessment form "emotional stability and SAE." He also said something to me that angered and puzzled me at the time. He said, "Once you get to where you are going and get stable and settled in, you will probably do a lot of good there."

I didn't know what to expect when I got to prison. I didn't know what to look for or what to be afraid of. Initially, I didn't care. I was afraid of everything. I was afraid someone would hurt me, I was afraid someone would sexually abuse me, and I was afraid for my health since I had a heart condition. I didn't trust anyone, any system, anything, and I didn't trust myself and my awareness and judgement. I was afraid I would be used again and again and be helpless and have nowhere to turn for help. I was afraid no one would ever love me or trust me again, I was afraid my life was over, and I wished it were.

What do women fear as first time incarcerants? They fear separation from family, homosexuality, intimidation, staff insensitivity, brutality, and sexual harassment from staff.

When you first come to prison, fear can be so overpowering you may experience anxiety attacks. You are afraid to cry, afraid you'll never stop. You contain your rage for fear you will hurt yourself or others; anger has never been an acceptable emotion for women anyway. You may go through loss and grief

so intense you fear you will suffocate. You are constantly on guard, ever vigilant.

Prison evokes fear from two fronts, internal and external. In order to live with your fears, you must first identify them. Once they are identified, you can work toward easing them, facing them and dealing with them.

Women's experience of prison is different from men's experience of prison. Women also have different fears and degrees of fear. "I thought prison would be like Lexington, maximum lock-down, abrasive guards, tough women. I was afraid of getting a "mean" room-mate, one who is always angry, mad at everything and everyone. I was afraid I would be stuck with her and unable to change that circumstance. I was afraid of the unknown, not knowing what I might get into. I was afraid "the room-mate" would physically hurt me. I thought, "I did this crime, I can do the time with a snap of my fingers." It never occurred to me I would have a guilt trip or go into a depression until I went through one. Now I'm afraid I'll fall into a pit, be overlooked, and never get out." Some of us fear we will always be afraid, even after we're out and the sentence is discharged.

Some of us experience revulsion, "I wasn't afraid of so many things, but the movies that portray the violence in prison are scary. I was disturbed by the amount of homosexuality there is here. I was afraid that this experience would change me for the worse, not the better." In a population of over 500 women, there are few instances of actual physical violence, "there is a lot of screaming and swinging and aggressive posturing, but only a few actually get injured. The homosexuality is worse than I could ever have dreamed. It's incomprehensible to me that women who are straight on the streets turn to that behavior in here."

We also become afraid of how we appear to others, what we are doing wrong to attract unwanted attention. "I've been intimidated and propositioned and had no idea what to do, so I just walked away. I was scared I was sending off mixed signals (rape victim guilt). Then I withdrew and read and watched the women and eventually began to venture out again. It doesn't scare me like it did at first. They are talking about the same feelings I have for a male, they just direct those feeling at another female."

What should we have feared coming into the system? Perhaps we should have feared deterioration of our relationships with family and friends who simply could not understand or continue to act as if everything was alright. We should have feared having a record, not being able to vote, not being able to find housing, a job, get transportation, medical care, food, and medication when we get out. Perhaps we should have feared being ignored, overlooked, being automatically labeled a liar, a thief, and treated like a child.

We are concerned and worried about case-managers and counselors not caring to deal with our problems or not having the time and being overlooked for a work-release, a half-way house, or programs that could help with our rehabilitation. There is constant fear about the rules and lack of information

about regulations and knowing you cannot assume anything; the rules will change just like Oklahoma weather. We fear not knowing what we need to know in order to be successful in transition from this minimum security facility to the community. We fear not knowing what is really available to us on the outside. We are concerned about what kind of job we can find, where we're gonna go, if our family has forgotten about us, and how we're gonna support ourselves. We're afraid of personal changes; how will people we love react when we get home? We are afraid the patriarchal system will continue to dominate and not allow us any measure of success.

For many women, being in prison is like being in an abusive relationship. The suspicion, the constant battery of noise, anger, helplessness, the lack of any understanding or support can put women who have a history of being abused straight back into the fear position. We fear chaos, disgust, depression, and being out of control. The exhaustion that sometimes results from grinding emotional turmoil can erupt into explosions of overwhelming grief or anger.

We fear not knowing what is going on outside these prison walls; we fear not knowing what our children think of us; we fear our children think we deserted them; we fear not being there to watch our children grow or learn; we fear not being able to hold our children when they're crying at night. We fear this time will never end, that the world will leave us behind; we fear we won't have the job skills to work with the new technology, we fear we won't be able to handle the pressure; we fear we will return to our addictions. We fear we will learn deep hatred, intolerance, and prejudice. We fear we will be so isolated that our own minds will become the only reality and our perceived reality will become our only reality. We fear being close to anyone; we fear being alone.

"I figured there would be a lot of hard women in prison, like on T.V., catwalks, locked cells, bars, razor wire. I never had any family go to prison. I thought there would be a lot more violence.

The first fear is the fear of there not being anyone to have as a friend. I feared other court actions and not knowing how long I would ultimately be in prison. I was afraid I would have to prove how tough I was, that someone would pick me out and push me to the limits to see what I'm made of.

The second fear is the aloneness I felt, the feeling that came over me when I first walked in and the door clanged shut. I feared not knowing what was expected of me, and the isolation.

My family rallied around me and became closer and supportive after my arrest and my coming to prison. My life before my arrest was crazy. When I was arrested it was a relief, at least I was getting taken care of at county, instead of constantly worrying about the next day. It was a regrouping time, a haven, a place to begin pulling the pieces back together. I wasn't bouncing off the walls anymore.

My primary fear now is what I am gonna do when I get outta here. Here you have limits set on you, here you have people tell you when you can go and

what you can do. All these decisions will be mine and totally mine for the first time in my life when I get out. Knowing the age I am and having to start over is frightening. I'm also afraid I will allow things to overwhelm me and I will become paralyzed, immobilized by the fear.

If I hadn't made the decision to change my life, a more realistic fear, when I came into the system, would have been how easily it would be to get caught up in the games that go on, like the drugs and homosexuality. I could have ended up worse off then when I came in.

The real fear should be if you're not willing to confront yourself, deal with issues, the chances are you will be right back in the system. If you're not willing to change, you'll get caught up in the destructive lifestyle and there won't be any change and you won't be better off when you leave." You can get better, or you can get bitter.

My fear about leaving is the discrimination placed on you by society and not being able to stand up to them. They said, "Stay away from people who judge you because you have a record." It still may be hard to stand up to that. It could be real easy to get down on yourself and become depressed, anxious and fearful once again, and that can get you in trouble all over again.

How do women respond to fear? Women experience everything from aggression to withdrawal, suicidal behaviors, attention-seeking, preoccupation with their body, and "medical" needs. They develop eating disorders as a control issue, and remain naive and ignorant about their future lives.

I fear gender discrimination. Women make up approximately 10% of the prison population in Oklahoma. The prevailing society and culture here is generally unforgiving of it's women making mistakes, committing crime.

> "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.
>
> --Jesus, The Gnostic Gospels

We have to confront our own being, confront our world. Change is not never-changing, it is ever-changing. In order to avoid the death and craziness inside us, we have to confront ourselves head-on and straight-up like that.

Prison evokes fear and loss, and you may feel that you can't tolerate losing anything or anyone else. You learn to fear the loss of privacy, integrity, honor. You have internal fears of being sucked away by the undertow of painful memories. The chaos, disgust, and being out of control causes more fear to build. It takes a lot of effort to get through the day managing our own internal stressors without having to deal with the inherent stress of prison life. Exhaustion from the constant emotional turmoil, the noise pollution, our anger, other's anger, aggression, and hyper-vigilance can destroy you if you let it.

One woman related, "Initially, I was in shock and numb on arrival. I was more afraid of the CO's than the inmates. I came into F.O.R.T. and because of my crime and who was killed I was more afraid of them. My first night here, I was being "shocked in" and one of the CO's made a remark to another CO, "You better watch your back with this one Officer _____, she's a cop killer." Talk about being terrified! As a result, I was very withdrawn, quiet. I had to sit back and evaluate who I could trust, talk to. I evaluated the staff. There's only a few I talk to now even after four years. I have to feel safe to trust someone and this is hardly a safe environment. I tested some of the staff by talking about small insignificant things and if it wasn't thrown up at me or used against me, I could begin to trust a little. I observed staff. If they talked about others in front of me then they would talk about me in front of others. I learned to read their behavior and body language. I evaluate staff by who they run with, other staff with "bad reputations" or inmates who are users. I evaluate staff by the way they handle other inmates, who they let manipulate them. Watch how they carry themselves, if they are arrogant, lazy, dragging along, or if they are honest. consistent, and personable. Try to establish if they treat people differently according to their crime, or if they respect each of us as a person, a human being."

So what do you do about the fear? You find someone safe to talk to, someone safe to cry with, someone safe to express your anger to. You choose to set limits on your resources, time, canteen, and caring. You learn to protect yourself from the constant emotional drain and threat in daily prison life. You get busy and keep busy. You learn to live without things you always thought you had to have and find you are less encumbered by material things. You learn to rely on yourself for your sanity. You have to learn to live in the here and now without false hopes and illusions. You have to do that every day.

You keep your boundaries intact; personal space is different for everyone. You don't come up behind someone and playfully pull their hair or pat them on the back. Just like Viet Nam vets, we react to the physical intrusion of someone touching us without our giving implicit or explicit permission. You don't corner someone or close off their space; we always need "room to run." You learn to read body language, take those signals to heart.

There are predators here, just as there are predators on the outside. Predators desire superiority and power over others because they are insecure. Predators appeal to our needs and "neediness." Predatory traits are rage, craftiness, and a "killing nature." They are invested in either/or situations; there are no shades of grey. Predators have ulterior motives and use deception and underhanded tactics, promising to take care of you forever when, in truth, it is only until the next victim comes along. They prey on other's generosity and naivete and the newness to the system. If you have been used and abandoned in the past, you will recognize the feelings. They will be familiar to you. Predators are overfamiliar, they try to be your buddy, they are free with jokes

and those jokes are frequently at the expense of women. They are watchers, waiting to pick out the most vulnerable ones among us. They talk loud to draw attention to themselves and their dominance. They intimidate with staring, facial and hand gestures, and tone of voice. They invade your space. They get too close, too quick, and their language routinely includes terms like bitch, 'ho, tramp, and motherfucker. They talk about others and will try to isolate you from other acquaintances or friends so you will be dependent on them. They are critical of you, and whatever you try to do is wrong or not good enough. They are jittery, fidgety, impatient, sarcastic, and use authority as power. They are unprofessional. They "demand" respect knowing it will not be freely given to them. If you confuse the fact that you are in prison with being a slave and you submit and cower, this will draw other predators and you will be passed around, used, and re-used, again and again.

Besides inmate predators, there are staff and officer predators, after all they are human, too. They may think they are "right" in their decisions and judgements because their authority has never been called into question. With regard to the rules and procedures, they are right because that's what prison is, rules, whether they make sense or not. But if they feel their authority gives them power over you as a person, not an inmate, they are wrong and this behavior sets us all up for abuse and unnecessary grief.

The many staff and officers who are not predators are consistent and professional. They are in the system for a career. They have maturity,

The many staff and officers who are not predators are consistent and professional. They are in the system for a career. They have maturity, dedication, abide the rules, don't play, aren't gamey, and are honest and approachable. There are no closed doors without windows, no secrets. You know where you stand and they command respect by their standard of behavior. You may not like them, they may not be your friend, it may be hard to get the courage to approach them, but, if they have the above qualities, they can probably be trusted.

When you are brand new to the system you must use your intuition. Ask yourself these key questions: What is not as it appears? What is the pay-off for them, for you? Is it worth it? Look at the situation from all angles. Listen to that little voice you may not have heard for awhile, listen to the warnings that come from within, your intuition. Learn to separate thought from feelings. As women in prison, we are walkers on the rim, peripheral, outsiders all together, an uncommon mix. Respect for our own unique humanity is the key.

"If You Don't Stand For Something, You'll Fall For Anything."
--Country song

You learn that you give away your power when you allow others to push your buttons. Ultimately, the only person who has control over your mind, your body, and your life is you. You may be locked up, but your mind needn't be locked away.

The system teaches us that we are powerless. As women used to being "property", being property of the State and D.O.C. is not foreign to us. However, when we believe the state can do ANYTHING to it's property, fear can immobilize us and cloud our ability to think and respond RATIONALLY. It can put us at risk medically and legally when we react out of fear rather than listen and respond.

**Your philosophy must be to exceed the expectations of your job or assignment.**

POWER IN THE PEN

What kind of power do we as individuals in the prison system have? What kind do we respect? What kind do we seek?

Authority is the primary power recognized in the penitentiary. But there are other kinds of power, power that we have access to and can use to our advantage. There is Relational power in a one-on-one situation that establishes a basis for Communication power, the learning and knowing as a process towards Wisdom, knowing yourself.

There are several recognized forms of power: influential, persuasive, communicative, and informal power. We change our behaviors by investigating our powers. We change our behavior by rethinking our principles and values. This is enormous power and it liberates us to choose how we will live our lives now and in the future. Our power derives from learning about ourselves, our values and ethics, and where our principles and values are invested.

Feelings are receptive impressions. Emotions are our response to feelings. Painful feelings can happen at any time and are tolerable only when we learn how to feel and release them in the moment, the here and now.

Essential individuality can only emerge when we are able to see ourselves as we really are, not as we wish we were.

We learn to express ourselves honestly and directly rather than try to effect and manipulate others. Personal power and true liberation can only start with the psychological transformation of ourselves. So what if we get out of prison if there is no goal for which it is worthwhile to be free.

No fear is stronger than our own fear of our shadowself. True courage is confronting your true self. Prison is a place that demands change. You can go forward or deteriorate and "die" to yourself. Either way, time will pass.

Growth of the total woman (mind, body, and spirit) is essential for survival in prison and out. We must rise above the suicide and crazy-making, the sadness and madness of this experience. It is the only way to truly be free from prison and free of prison. We have to outgrow the need for someone else to be making our decisions for us and "taking care" of us. If you give up and give in, the system decides who you are and labels you. Prove them wrong. The only escape you ever need plan is the escape from the chains you place on yourself.

There will be stumbling blocks on your journey. Some of them are fear, denial, impatience, unrealistic goals (fairy tale type), dependencies, fatal attachments, anger, guilt, isolation, worry, helplessness, and hopelessness. You have to surge forward past the obstacles. If you regress and retreat, you must regroup so that you can continue your spiral up and out of this hole you put yourself in.

"Freedom is what you do with what's been done to you."
--Jean-Paul Sartre

First, you have to accept yourself; start with who you are now. Accept responsibility for your life, your ship. If you don't, someone else will take over the helm. Learn about cause and effect, for every action there is a reaction. Our actions control our fate.

Prison provides time. It can be wasted or used for the good. "Doing time" doesn't mean keep so busy and involved in whatever we're doing that we don't deal with our personal demons. "Doing time" means dealing with our personal demons. Everything about prison is so dumb, disgusting, or degrading that the real crime is not doing the work that helps you make sense of your life and get it in order.

Don't jump into anything. Watch, study, assess, control your actions, and direct yourself. We have to learn to watch, study, control, direct our minds, and the way we think, too. Observe what you think and the results of what you think and do. If you can achieve positive results from a prison cell and make a success of yourself while in prison, you can do it anywhere. Against all odds, this is a challenge from which we can't allow ourselves to back down.

We must be about "mining", getting down to the nitty-gritty, dig through the muck to mine the gold within ourselves. Anything that doesn't make you better contaminates the gold. Any time you give up or give in, you've lost. If life won't be better when you get out, you lose again.

As it is within, it is without. Looking out and going within. Spiritual awareness and a clear, healthy, mentally alert mind that can recognize reality and cope with it is the key to freedom.

There is a secret person undamaged in every individual.
--Paul Shepard

Do the best you can to eat right and exercise and give your body a chance to feel good without all the old addictions and crutches. Be healthy and your mind will reward you by working better if you do. Eat breakfast before you go to school or work so you will be able to learn. Learn, learn, learn! It doesn't matter if you didn't learn it before, learn it now. Now is what you have to work with, sometimes our "tomorrows never come." Any positive, healthy activity is better than none. It's a process, growth, change, life. Feeding the best possible materials into the process will produce a better product.

Learn a marketable skill, you don't have to do it forever. If you're good at what you do, other opportunities will open up. Don't get caught in a rut, venture out, put your skills on the line where you will have to learn more. Learn more deeply, more widely. Pay attention, it may be the only currency you will have for awhile.

Beware of extremes and absolutes, "either/or" situations and relationships. Bitterness and depression is hard on our family and friends. Learn to bear your burdens for yourself. You will have to eventually anyway.

Women's addictions: eating disorders, relationship junkies, alcohol, drugs (prescription or street), gambling, shopping, sex. All these are destructive cycles of behavior. When we indulge ourselves in our addictions, we give up power and control to someone or some thing. When we give up our power and control, we create an environment ripe for abuse. Every time we indulge in our addiction, we give some "other" the ability to control us. We have to grow beyond our addictions, just as we must outgrow the prison experience and criminal justice system. Growth is the only process that will bring our lives under our own control again and lead to joy and balance and hope for our future. We have the time, opportunity, and privilege of healing and growing and it's totally

under our own control. Like Nike therapy, "Just do it." Become your own self, not someone else's idea of who you should be. In becoming your own self, you are in control of your future, no one and nothing else controls your future.

The statistics regarding women in prison are alarming, most have been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused. Most of us need to overcome a lifetime of pain and emotional garbage. While you are here, your goal is to heal. There is help available once you recognize that you are your problem. Your past, your behaviors, and your addictions have brought you to this crossroads in your life. Take a deep breath and vow to change what only you can change, yourself.

"Ignorance will keep you in chains forever."

Read. Read fiction, read biographies, read fantasy, read anything. If you can't read, get enrolled in school and learn to read. Take part in the Leisure Library programs on parenting, the enrichment courses on how to write poetry, or learning about Women's History, the culture of women. After all, for however long you will be here, you will be living in a culture of women.

Learn to play healthy games, games that allow you to feel better about yourself. Go to the gym, the aerobics classes, learn about your body and how it works when you are without mind altering chemicals. Learn new hobbies, interests you can pursue just for fun, something you can take with you when you leave.

Learn your resources, what's real and what's not. Don't expect everything to be perfect and wonderful when you leave here. The Magic Kingdom outside of prison doesn't exist. If you don't take care of your problems and learn new ways to cope, you will take all those problems with you when you leave.

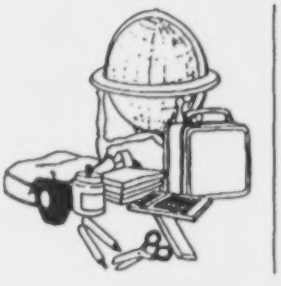
You may think: "I'm never getting out, I can't stand it," but the facts are that 97% of offenders eventually are released. It's not the end of the world.

"The price is too high, I can't get up, go to work/school, etc.," but the only thing that will get you out and keep you out is honesty, courage, and commitment to doing the right thing, so start now.

There are ways to become motivated. Set goals, short term goals and long term goals. Write down what you do and each small step you take to further your goals. Your first short term goals may simply be related to getting through the day doing one positive thing for yourself and your future. But know that each small step forward is a step out of prison. Eventually, all of the little steps become a stride that will take you out and keep you out. Plant the seeds of growth, nourish the seeds of life. If you are not actively pursuing life, you are pursuing death. As Winston Churchill said, "Never, never, never...give up."

Learn not to count on magic releases, quick fixes, quick outs. It will take as long as it takes. Practice living in the here and now and growing your way out of prison. Face reality. A total commitment to a positive life when you are in prison is the best decision you will ever make for you and your life. If you can do this in prison, you can do it anywhere.

# Knowledge Is Power



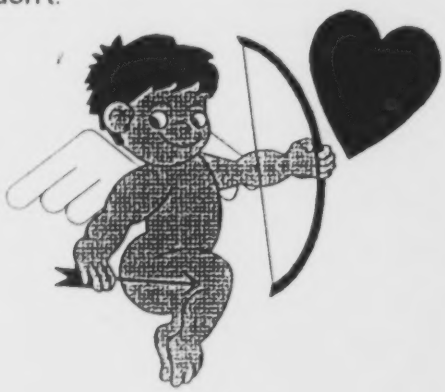
## Get An Edcuation

# INCARCERATED WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL & SOCIAL NEEDS...

1. Need to build non-exploitive relationships with staff
2. They need to feel connected
3. Women tend to build self-esteem through relationships
4. Women need adult relationships more than men
5. Females view the justice system differently
6. Relationships are more important than rules to females
7. Relationships & responsibility often mean more to women than men
8. Equality of programs for women is not necessarily sameness

PRISON SEXUALITY

After "separation from family," the second most mentioned fear is the fear of homosexuality. You see "women in prison" movies time after time. The fear that some aggressive, dominant, hard core lesbian will see your vulnerability, your newness to "the game of penitentiary", surfaces for the first time. You are confused to begin with, shocked at the entire situation you're in, open-mouthed in wonder at everything that happens in the dorms. You try invisibility, making no waves, asking for nothing, and watching. But the predator still notices you and comes with offers of comfort, food, and protection. Some women get hooked, some women don't.



Touch, human touch is the deepest, most primal human need. Babies die from lack of being held and touched even when they are given adequate nutrition. Touch is essential to human life, existence, and growth. How can we touch and be touched and not fall into behaviors that may or may not be in our best interest or what we really want. Sexuality is based on that primal need, touch. In prison, where homosexuality is rampant, although forbidden, there is the added element of women alone and confused and looking for something or someone to hang on to no matter what the cost might be.

In prison, there are a number of different life styles regarding our sexuality. There are the straights who stay that way, and the straights who get involved and "turned-out" although they meant to stay straight. There are geographic gays, there are those who lived a lesbian life-style prior to incarceration and continue to do so in prison and there are those who are celibate and were prior to coming to prison.

"I have no inclination toward homosexuality. I have had no experience or wouldn't even consider homosexuality. No one has tried to intimidate me, I've had no propositions. I give out pretty good signals. I'm not interested in that sort of thing at all. I have been celibate the last eight years, prior to coming to prison. I manage my own sexuality by avoiding explicit sex books, romances, movies on T.V. If I'm not exposed to that kind of stimuli, I don't have much trouble suppressing those feelings. Celibacy becomes easier with time. I keep those feelings under wrap, work, and go to aerobics to relieve that tension. I keep busy."

Another woman reports, "I'm straight. I manage my sexuality by writing it down, the feelings of loving and missing him. I don't do sexually explicit letters. To relieve the tension, I read Jackie Collins or Sidney Sheldon books to relieve that built-up pressure. I have orgasms in my sleep, kinda "wet dreams."

She went on to say, "I write and I paint. I write about concerns of women for women. I paint myself into another world. I share most of my writing and painting with others. I get a fair amount of hugs when others are happy or sad. I read somewhere that approximately 15% of women have orgasms in their sleep. I have always been fortunate that way. There have been times in my life that I have been celibate for long periods, once almost five years. I have orgiastic dreams about every two months, regular as clockwork. I once had a try at a lesbian relationship, it was uncomfortable and she was more possessive than most men I've known. Just doesn't work for me. Of course my relationships with men in the past haven't worked for me either, at least not for longer than 14 years. I've been married three times and the longest marriage was 14 years. Celibacy is not that bad, I have lots of creative energy to spare now."

Another inmate expressed, "I've never been interested in homosexuality, not even curious. I could care less what these women do. I saw two women kissing in the breezeway this morning and I was just disgusted. I don't care about <u>what</u> they do. It's not what you do, it's the way you do it, all out in the open for God and everyone to see. That's what disgusts me. I don't think anyone is forced into homosexuality. It depends on the crowd you hang with, who you decide to associate yourself with. That crowd knows who to approach. I talk to a lot of women on the yard, but I just talk to them. The idea of same sex relationships is just not for me. I think the ones who are curious and the ones who have really been hurt by men are the ones that fall into it. For me, I think it's just a frame of mind. I just don't focus on sex, I don't masturbate. I know that what I want is not available here so I don't even think about it."

Body language is a difficult thing to write about. Sometimes we just "know" when there is something wrong or we are wary. That knowing is based on cues and signals that are so everyday and common, we don't know we are receiving the message. If people look at you, through you, you know they will discount you. Watch the way they walk, always looking around to see who's looking at them. Those who are loud, act like they're on stage, know all the prison slang, street slang, and move in groups or packs like wolves are drawing attention to themselves. It's like a fishing lure, if you act interested they might reel you in. Those who talk too loud so everyone can hear them and then are offended and complain about other people "staying out of my business" are drawing attention to themselves. Those who demand respect, but respect no one and are loud about it are all selling something or wanting something. It's best to simply ignore those who are demanding attention. If you let them know it bothers you, just like regular two year old's, they will continue the behavior.

Beware of people always running around the dorm, they are usually begging. Watch out for the ones who try to act like gangsters from the 30's movies. They want people to watch them; they are exhibitionists. Another woman reported, "I've had homosexuality confronted to me on several occasions, but usually they'll respect your choice of not wanting to be one." Always remember, even in here, even if you're afraid, you have a choice. Know what you are doing or suggesting or implying when you hang out with the gay crowd.

Of those women who are homosexual, "gay, wives of other women, or studs," there are those who are committed to their lifestyle. Some are bisexual and some were experienced in these complex relationships prior to being incarcerated. "Homosexuality was not new to me when I came to prison. A lot of it here is a game, probably 50% game, 50% loneliness. I have loved women, but not been in love with a woman. I think the predators look for weaknesses and vulnerability, those women who want to be accepted everywhere, have to be everybody's friend, those who desire to please everybody but themselves."

One woman reported, "I was not and am not a homosexual, but I was taken in under the wing of one who wouldn't let anyone mess with me. But after awhile, you learn they won't bother you unless you want to be bothered." Still another said, "Homosexuality is pushed on you for either canteen, money, or sex. If you have money, people look to use you up. If you don't submit, you are intimidated and this is brutality and you're scared to sleep at night when you've told them no."

Each of us have our own fears. Everything in life can teach us something if we let it. Anticipation of the worst can cause needless pain and anxiety. We each have to deal with our fears in our own way. However, if we are continually fearful that homosexuality will be forced on us, we may create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The "Studs", the serious players, have their own view of this circumstance. The way they dress is advertisement, "a statement that we mess with women, don't ask me for nothing if you don't want to play, cause you can look at me and tell what I do. I ain't no trick." Those who "don't want some action shouldn't smile at studs, be curious about it, or stare at us. It makes us think they're wanting something. Don't hang around us."

These women were very candid about what they do and what they believe. "I don't like to turn women out because it becomes a fatal attraction. They don't want you to be around anyone else, they don't want to go home and will do anything to keep you. When you turn someone out, it's like having a virgin in the straight world, it's new, it's first love, it's obsessive love because women love deeper. They will fight you, fight others for you, go to lock, attempt suicide, and trick their time off to stay with you."

The difference between the experimenters and the players is, "I'm gooder than the rest, and better than the best, they ain't running anything and can't tell me what to do." It seems that female predators are much the same as the male predators...they want what they want, when they want it, and it's their way or no way. This is an observation, not a criticism. They are what they are and they don't apologize for that. Being a real stud is a control issue. Control issues

have the same drive for power as abusive male/female relationships. The real studs are disdainful of the Wanna-Be studs. They feel the Wanna-Be's "come in switchin' and walk out bitchin'," then they wanna walk hard, but you gotta be hard to walk hard." However, in all this they are serious about protection and safe sex and also warn against smoking after someone else and sharing drinks and food after someone else. They don't want AIDS and they don't want Tuberculosis or Hepatitis. They also know their advertisement works and arouses curiosity and there are always women who will see the "implied power" and go for it. They will prey off need and loneliness and weakness as any other predator would.

So, we are back to vulnerability. Who is the most vulnerable, who is the most at risk? Who is the predator going to pick from among the pack? What kinds of signs do the predators look for? They look for followers, women without leadership qualities, women who are needy and ask for cigarettes or canteen. They "charge" two or three for one and debts build, and eventually, debts have to be paid. They warned us about the predators while we were still in Lexington, remember? They look for women who want to be "taken care of." They look for the ones that look the most lost and will gratefully be part of any group, just to belong somewhere.

What can you do to avoid the traps? First and foremost, learn to respond rather than react. Responding requires thought, reacting is simple raw emotion. Always think before you act. Trust no one and be very cautious about who you choose as friends until you have had time to watch. The first few months in prison is like learning to cross the street when you were a young child. The old rule holds true in this environment. Stop, look, and listen. Be sure to look both ways. See if it is safe to venture out. Walk fast, don't wander around, look like you have a purpose when you are going anywhere. Don't visit on the dorm from cube to bunk and on around. Don't associate with the groups you feel uncertain about. Don't borrow, don't let anyone borrow from you. Learn to say no and mean it, this place can teach you that. Don't smile or make eye contact with strangers, maintain your independence by having the things you need and don't try to support anyone else. Maintain your sexual dignity by any means necessary, set boundaries, set limits, learn to say NO! You won't die if you are alone for awhile, you won't die if no one touches you for awhile. Ask only for what you need to survive or be clean until you figure out who you might be able to trust. Learn to respect yourself. If you can't do that, no one else will. Remember, the only thing you control in prison is your body and your mind. Never surrender yourself by giving yourself away. Don't accept favors unless you know you can pay it back immediately. The obvious traps to avoid are drugs, gangs, sex, and gambling. Help others if you can, but don't become the Community Chest.

Always remember, even in here, even if you're afraid, you have a choice. Know what you are doing or suggesting or implying when you hang out with the gay crowd.

Though There
are many
paths & roads to
follow...

Choose Boundaries
For You
in Every Aspect
of your Life.

Learn to Say No!

# TOTAL ALIENATION

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *Him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Romans 1:21

ALIENATION...INSTITUTIONALIZATION

We come into the system alienated and we have grieving to do. The "normal" grief process is: Shock - "I can't believe it," Denial - "there's been some kind of mistake," Anger - "they can't do this to me, I'll show them," Bargaining - "I know I can convince someone I'll never do it again, I've learned my lesson. Please God, just let me out now and I'll be good," Depression - "I can't do this. I won't live long enough to ever get out," and Acceptance - "Okay, this is gonna take as long as it takes. I've got to do something now about my life."

If for whatever reason, we don't make it through the grieving process in a healthy way, we become institutionalized. We stuff it, we go through the shock and the denial, but instead of bargaining, we become demanding. When those demands are not met, and often not even heard, we become despairing, hopeless, and eventually, resignation sets in and true powerlessness occurs. If you believe you have no power whatsoever, NEVER WILL, and can't EVER change anything, you are institutionalized.

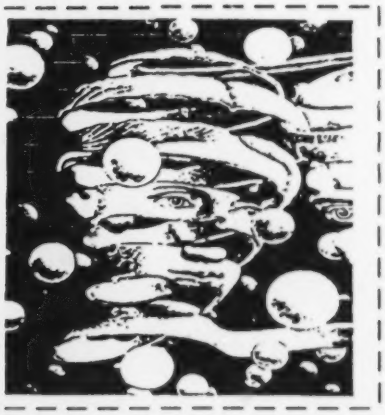
Anyone incarcerated for any length of time and most staff working in institutions know that reintegration is not a three hour process in the Programs Building Auditorium.

One woman reports, after being incarcerated seven years, the intense discomfort in the "fitting back into society" drama. "I followed the path, step-by-step from work release to PWP. While working PWP, I was afraid to wave at passing motorists when they waved at me. I was so conditioned to the "no contact, don't touch, don't say anything" that I didn't know how to respond anymore. I followed the rules and was eligible to go to a half-way house, got there in the middle of the night, no one explained anything, just "this is where you live." My disorientation and my distress at feeling that "normal" activities were wrong, continued. The first time I held a $5.00 bill, I was afraid and wanted to hide it. The first time I stood next to a man and he indicated an interest in getting to know me, I asked my friend to tell him to get away from me because this was illegal. For the first time in my life I got to know my family. I didn't know them at all because I avoided them all the time when I was on drugs and alcohol. I don't know how to cook, I don't know how to do the routine ordinary things of everyday life. After doing it right for eight months, working two jobs, doing all the paper work, I got to go "home" to my Aunt's house. I had a room to myself, and free run of the house, and just standing and looking at the food in the fridge, not even being hungry, just looking was a novelty. One day I was in my room with the door locked, the T.V. and radio on, eating chips, and I went to the closet to get a pop! The realization struck me that I was only in my new cell with my pop stored in the closet. I might have been in the free world, but *I never got out!*"

After being conditioned for years to being treated like a liar, a thief, a con, a manipulator, and a criminal, making the change of mind set to the free world may be harder than just signing a pack and getting physically out of a prison.

Learning to feel worthy of the money you make, the family and friends you have, the relationships that sustain you may be the most challenging thing you will do. In the free world, under normal circumstances where automatic worth is assumed, you have to feel worthy, believe you have paid your price, done your punishment, and it's over. Otherwise, you never leave the system.

LEAVE ALIENATION
BEHIND THE FENCE
BELIEVE YOURSELF TO BE WHOLE AND WORTHY
CREATE YOUR PORTRAIT!



*OR*

# RECIDIVISM

**Why the Revolving Door?**
**We must not allow inmates to get comfortable.**
**We must habilitate or rehabilitate.**

## How?

## THE ANSWER IS:

1. Community correctional facilities in each county seat.

2. Provide educational programs at each facility (6 - 9 p.m.), utilizing part-time retired educators and local available Vo-Tech facilities.

3. Provide facilities for women that re-unite families, with day care while women work and get children out of foster care.

# 10 REASONS FOR COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

1. Does not allow the inmate to use anonymity while doing time.
2. Forces active community involvement where crime was committed.
3. Utilitizes the "shame" factor to be displayed in front of peers while making restitution to the community where the crime was commited.
4. Sets inmates up to succeed rather than fail.
5. Re-activates the dysfunctional family unit for females.
6. Makes the inmate our focus for reform, not the system.
7. It initiates the process of habilitation and rehabilitation, and discourages warehousing of inmates.
8. Eliminates the bed-driven numbers game that sets the inmate up for failure.
9. Eliminates the "for profit" lower security units that promote deviance, dope, and despair.
10. Our current system does not work.

BEYOND THE SOCIAL STIGMA.
WHAT'S IT REALLY GONNA BE LIKE "OUT THERE."

Life is ultimately about survival. It always has been, always will be. The less you own, the more freedom you have. With ownership comes responsibility. Each responsibility ties you down a little, more and more freedom is gradually eroded away.

Each relationship has it's obligations, every obligation further restricts freedom, so that eventually you are either thing/possession oriented or person bound.

Throughout the ages of wars, disease, pestilence, famine, persecution, humankind has sought and fought to stake out it's territory. This piece of earth is mine! We do things my way around here because that's the way it's always been done and that's the way I want it done.

The established territory then becomes a community with customs and over the millennia traditions, "That's the way we do things here, because that's the way it's always been done." Eventually communities form, grow into towns, cities, and countries. Customs and traditions become immutable, "foreigners" enter our territory and because our way is "sacred" somehow, customs, traditions, and morals have to be legislated. Someone had to start it somewhere, at some time in the past. Someone had to make the rules.

To be part of some thing or some one, you relinquish part of your Self. "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main..." John Donne, 1623.

So if you want to be part of any group, tribe, commune, you have to play by their rules. If you want to be part of a gang, you play by their rules. If you want to be a Baptist, for instance, you play by Christianity's rules. If you want to be a politician, you choose a set of rules to play by, Republican or Democrat. The choices go on and on.

Some will say we chose to be in prison by our actions, breaking the rules, breaking the law. Perhaps subconsciously we did. Perhaps we "knew" we needed the experience of living in a highly structured environment, knew we needed some limit setting, needed to rework some boundary issues. Consciously or subconsciously, however we chose to be here, we will eventually leave. When we do, we will have MAJOR RULES to follow. If we leave on a special program or on parole, our freedom will be earned back, a little at a time. Nothing will be "given" to us.

While we are in prison, our every thought is aimed at "When I get out, just get me outta here, I don't care how, where, just get me out and I'll deal with my future once I'm out."

As convicts, and ex-offenders what are our inalienable human rights? Legally, what can we expect, plan for, and count on?

I suspect as women we will already have two strikes against us. One as an ex-offender, one as a woman. It seems to me that the prison system keeps us in the dark when knowledge is power. I believe it is in our own best interest to know as much as possible about what is available for us, so that we don't strike out before we find out, once we are out. I also expect all the programs and courses we take while we're incarcerated will be only tools used to get out. Ultimately it's us, each as an individual, each woman's fight for freedom.

I believe it will be an individual effort, from the beginning, that will prepare us to be part of a community again. We will have to follow all the rules and, in addition, we will have to fight the social stigma.

As is usual in the patriarchal DOC system, "Much of the community based correctional programs are designed for men, female offenders receiving little priority in the correctional system." This quote is from a research paper titled "Barriers to Community-Based Services: Recidivism and Women Offenders" (Oklahoma Department of Corrections, Criminal Justice Research Consortium, Oklahoma University School of Social Work: Project Report, 1993.).

The primary resources vital to successful re-integration for the woman offender are: housing, transportation, available jobs, and programs that supplement income for food, medical services, and child-care.

In a number of research studies, it was found that women experienced more re-entry and financial problems and had a more negative view of their supervision, as well as having to cope with a more negative societal attitude than male offenders.

What community based programs that are available for female ex-offenders suffer from inadequate funding of the service, shifts in standards of eligibility, lack of coordination of resources between the prison and the community, and class bias and stigma.

Too often reintegration and institutional programs for female offenders are expansions of those developed for male inmates. Women's programs are not a priority, they're an afterthought.

There are programs out there, you just have to search. However, there does not appear to be a cooperative relationship between agencies that would facilitate the coordination of services.

Most female inmates face tremendous financial resource problems at the point of community reintegration. For job training programs to be effective, they must focus on providing job training that is relevant to the needs of the community job market and that will allow us to be able to support our family or have a possibility of doing so in the future.

Many of us will have difficulty locating affordable housing for ourselves and our families. Additionally, we may need assistance with income support and accessing public assistance and entitlement programs.

Most of this may be old news to many of you. Most of it's not gonna change. The system is overloaded. You would think that if the State truly wanted to decrease recidivism and help relieve the overcrowding, it would behoove them to provide the necessary services during the initial critical re-entry time so that we would make a successful transition into the community. It would save tax dollars wouldn't it?

In a political climate of punishment and retribution, without emphasis on rehabilitation, it will be sink or swim for each of us when we get out. Personally I would like to know my resources, what is available and start working on it here, working on my future now.

An article entitled "Finding Freedom Behind Bars" from the publication The Plain Truth presents a good summation of the situation. "Ninety-eight percent of all inmates in the United States are released. And then, usually within a few months, more than two thirds of them are back behind bars.
Why? Because they are not prepared for life back on the street. They are released without the knowledge or resources needed to find a job and support themselves. You can use your time inside to break the habits that got you in trouble. Then, those months or years need not be wasted. The motivation to change will have to come from you."

Programs vary from state to state and institution to institution. What's available in Oklahoma City may be different in Tulsa. You will need to be patient and persistent.

Here are some resources that may be of interest to you:

Volunteers in Corrections - Tulsa Chapter
1010 W. First St.
Tulsa, OK 74127

DHS Family Support Services
2409 N. Kelly
OKC, OK 73114

Oklahoma Cure
517 S.W. Second
Tulsa, OK 74157 - 0741

Oklahoma Cure
Box 852066
Yukon, OK 73085 - 2066

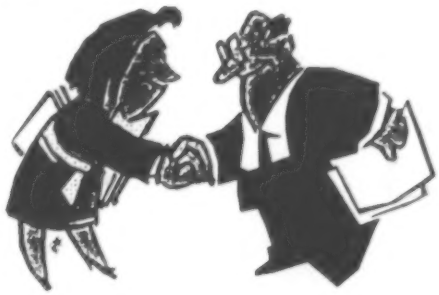
Oklahoma Volunteers in Corrections
P.O. Box 301
OKC, OK 73101

United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - EEOC
2401 E. St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20507

Housing & Urban Development
200 N.W. 59
OKC, OK 73102

WHAT'S REALLY OUT THERE?

What do we, as women, need to survive when we get out? What do the statistics indicate we need?



First and foremost we need education and job skills. We need appropriate marketable job skills and training, while we are here, on how to get a job, hold a job, and plan a budget. We have courses that help. Vocational Education teaches us that employers want dependable, loyal, honest, resilient, confident, punctual, adaptable, reliable, motivated people with good communication skills, good personal relation skills, and a positive attitude. Daily Living Skills teaches personal responsibility, resume writing, and a positive attitude. Transitional Living Class offers hope for the future.

Second, we need help with transportation, housing, food, and medical services. We need to know what to do when we come up against discrimination in the job market, or any kind of discrimination. You must believe this, we will encounter discrimination because we have a criminal record.

We need a Women's Resource Center in the major metropolitan areas, a clearing house, a support group, and a gathering place. We need a booklet on what to do the first twenty-four hours, the first three to five days, the first week, month. We need to know how to get a driver's license renewed, do we have to take the test again? If so, can we get a Drivers Manual while we are incarcerated so we can study it? Where do we go, what if our license was taken and we don't have any records anymore? What if we don't have a birth certificate? Where do we go when we get off the bus in the town where we have to live?

We need to know what services are available to us. Can we get food stamps, do we apply for low income housing six months prior to leaving? Where can we stay until housing is available? Do we write letters asking about jobs while we're still here? Who do we talk to about Vocational Rehabilitation, will we qualify?

So much of the focus while we are incarcerated is on getting out and the devil be damned about what we're going to do and how we're going to manage.

We need to see and hear positive role models, women who have gotten out of prison and gotten by, been successful, made a living and made a new life. We need a "sponsor" of sorts, someone who knows how hard it is and has done

it. We need to know it's possible and all the cards aren't stacked against us the moment we walk out the gate.

How will we apply for a job if what we have to wear is a pair of jeans and a T-shirt stamped with OKLAHOMA CORRECTIONS on it? Where can we go to get the clothes we need to apply for a job? How do we get the transportation we need to keep the job once we get it? If you're counting on family and friends, family eventually gets tired and friends get fed up.

Yes, there are books in the library with letter writing suggestions and lists of agencies. No, there is neither a step-by-step guide nor any encouragement. What are the rules, exactly, and what if the rules are printed out and the parole officer hands it to you and you really can't read?

It seems to me, if there was an earned credit course available on the reality of job-hunting, house hunting, getting through the bureaucratic maze, it would be well worth the time, effort, and money. It would need to be earned credit or mandatory to insure participation since we are all so suspicious of the government being "here to help us."

I have never been to a work-release center. I don't personally know what they are like, what services are provided, how we are processed and reintegrated back into society.

This is what I believe we need. We need a place to live, an empty motel would work. If it needed repairs, we could fix it up. Each room could be done individually with a deduction from the cost of living there for the work. This "Center" would need to have a manager who knows the ropes about prison life and all the baggage that goes with being fresh out of an institution. The manager would be the business person responsible for the physical running of the Center, ordering supplies, work assignments within the Center. She, along with the assigned PPO, the Counselor, and the Social Worker, would hold weekly team meetings. The Center's Social Worker would function as a resource awareness person. This person could make an assessment of our psycho-social status, work history, brief medical history, and make referrals to agencies for assistance. She would also work with the Employment Commission on job referrals, placement issues, and know the discrimination laws well enough to know when action about discrimination should be pursued. She could evaluate areas for community service and coordinate those areas with individuals and the courts.

The Counselor would function as case-manager and develop levels of responsibility. She would assess when we are ready for our children to come to visit, spend the night, when we could go on pass, and provide a support group to help us deal with the ongoing emotional turmoil and frustrations.

The Center would be a place where we could gradually re-enter society in a responsible manner. This is, of course, my fantasy.

Gina Crawford reports that the reintegration seminar given by Tim Ansivino primarily teaches how to fill out a job application, how to dress, and behave. From his seminar comes the following information: on regular parole and after discharge, ex-offenders are eligible for AFDC and food stamps. However, they are not eligible for these services on Mandatory Parole, PPCS, or EMP. To apply for these services you must go through DHS.

We are also eligible for Section Eight housing, HUD-homes. Applications for Section Eight housing can be picked up in the Leisure Library and submitted before your discharge date. There is a waiting list of about six months. Apply through DHS.

We are not eligible for vocational rehabilitation unless there is a "handicap," emotional, physical, or mental. Examples: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, High Blood pressure, heart disease, or learning disabilities. Go through DHS and the Oklahoma State Employment Agency.

If you have lost your driver's license due to DUI, you must go through Alcohol Training and Education classes before you can get your license back.

New clothes are available from J.C. Penney's and Anthony's so we will have something to wear for interviews. Details are available from Tim Ansivino. There are "specialists" in major metropolitan areas. We just have to figure out who they are and how to get in touch with them. The thing is, there are services available, we are responsible for finding out for ourselves what they are and how we access them. If we are on our own, this can be a frightening prospect. There are women who will eventually be released having no idea about today's world. When they entered prison, a computer took up a whole room, you couldn't carry it in a briefcase. They, too, wonder how they will make it.

One inmate commented, "What would it take for me as a long-termer (fifteen years)? Say that I had no one to help me when I got out. I would need a support team to guide me in finding a job, transportation would be a must, a place to live, there would be deposits to make for utilities, money needed for rent, food, clothes, and medication. How would you prepare me to make it in today's world? While I'm here, teach me <u>exactly</u> what is available to me and how to get the help I need. I would need a support system on the outside, a women's support system. I've asked several women on the yard and these are the same answers I received from them. One woman has been out there, worked a job and messed up because of her choices to make ends meet. Her solution to this problem now is to find a good man to marry so that he can help her make it. This saddens me because we as women have to depend on men to make it in a world that is big enough for all of us."

When we are released from here, we won't be entering the Magic Kingdom where everything is wonderful. We will have to start at the bottom, be willing to take any job so we can build the trust of the community that doesn't want us out there. Society is not forgiving. Just listen to the rhetoric about justice and criminals paying for their crimes. Even when we have paid, served our time, there will be those who will never trust us, believe in us, or give us a chance again. We have to climb out of this pit by ourselves, stand on our own feet, and face the wind. Be prepared by knowing the resources, expecting it to

Be prepared by knowing the resources, expecting it to be difficult, realizing that while you are incarcerated you don't pay for housing, food, transportation, utilities, etc. Know that there will be obstacles, disappointments, and rejections. Know you can persevere, you can pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again. Don't just be ready to leave this place, be ready <u>when</u> you leave so you don't ever return.

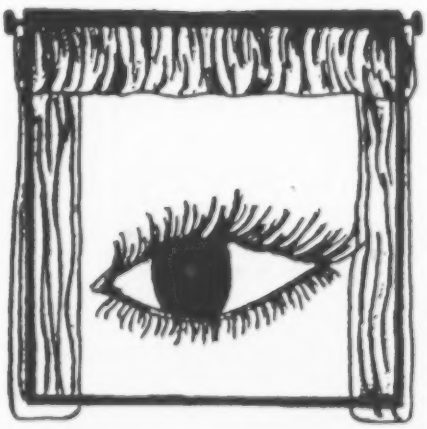
# Be Ready

# CHAPTER THREE:

# ANGER

by Dorita Pemberton

FIRST TIME BEHIND BARS



Has anyone ever said to you, "one of these days you're going to wake up dead?"

You've been rippin' and roarin', you got higher than a Georgia pine, you got set up, got betrayed, got careless, lost your temper, lost your job, or lost your mind. Whatever the case may be, you got busted. The gavel came to rest and you were found guilty. Now you wake up every morning in a jail cell feeling somewhat empty inside, alone, or like there's nothing left of you to give to life. Inhale, then exhale, there is more of you. You may be thinking that no one really cares about you or understands what you're feeling. You're feeling despair, fear, confusion, anger, maybe even shock. On the road that lies ahead of you, one thing is certain to remain the same and this is that everything changes somehow. There is a whole new world about to open up to you and you will find that you have resources within yourself that you didn't know were there to face the days. Life as you have lived it and the person that you are, does not have to be lost forever because you've been ordered to be held in the Department of Corrections for a term. But, let's hope that to some extent it is. The prisons are full of those who are getting more time on top of their time, people talking about their friends

who got back "in the mix" and are coming back in or they're dead. It is impossible to go back in time, but it is not impossible to lose your regret about what has happened in your life. You cannot control how other people will respond to your decisions, but you can control how you're going to respond to other people. You have been given the opportunity to begin your life anew. Say your life is a house with several windows. The view from one window is that of a busy little town, production springing up everywhere, people rushing urgently from one project to another. The view from a different window may be that of a field in bloom with flowers and a quiet calm rushes over you at the sight. If you are always going back to the same window you are limiting your choices of how to view that world and how to feel about life. Do you keep going back to the same window?

Through the course of this time, anger will likely be the thing you will most frequently have to deal with, whether it's your own or it belongs to someone else. After arrest, a lot of people feel anger toward another person or persons, for the condition of their lives. Projecting guilt is a cop-out. You may have had a bad childhood or you were trying to provide for your children. Whatever the case may be, the final decision for the actions we take are always our own. Most of us would have to admit there was another way to handle the situation we were in and we just made a bad choice.

The truth is that many of us don't make good decisions for ourselves and haven't for some time. The majority of incarcerated women share a very similar background: childhood sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, spousal abuse, poverty. We were the children of alcoholic or drug addicted parents; we were formerly uneducated; we were a parent at an early age; we have suffered the loss of our children due to some misfortune. The root of many of our behaviors may be attributed to such unfortunate conditions in our background. However, we must recognize the downward spiral we've lived on because we do not know how to control and/or vent our anger properly. Living behind a wall of anger is a way to try and protect ourselves from pain and fear or cover it up for a time. Trying to suffocate your feelings rather than confront them will only leave you with a smoldering fire that is easily ignited again. You must learn to control and direct your mind so that you are no longer dancing to someone else's tune or letting people juice you into doing things you would not otherwise do.

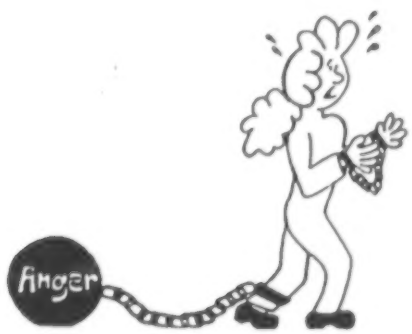
Get a grip.

In prison, you will be expected to follow some ridiculous rules and cope with the petty, childish jealousies and inconsiderate behaviors of group living. You will be expected to tolerate some shabby or unsanitary conditions and inconvenient restrictions of your property. You will periodically feel like a walking time bomb; you're in serious trouble when that happens. Learn to recognize your feelings for what they really are and what it is that evokes them. Before you do things you will regret, be aware of what is happening around you and inside of you. Are you reacting to a significant problem or something you yourself have magnified? What do you hope to get out of the situation? What is the pay-off going to be according to your reaction? Do you have other options? Try to tap into each one and listen for how your mind works. Look at the results of what you think and do. You can then use the outcome to direct or modify your actions. Gaining control over your feelings and your actions is a very valuable asset in life and a true freedom. Being controlled by the Department of

Corrections is extremely difficult for anyone, and staying in control of yourself is even harder if you make mistakes from time to time. Don't beat yourself down. Remember, it's not how many times you fall that counts, it's how many times you get up. If you keep making the same mistakes, maybe you could use some help. Ask for what you need, it's okay.

What about the anger associated with prison? The odds are you've been carrying a load of anger and bitterness with you since long before your arrival. The majority of women in prison have. Most can disclose a history of abuse in one form or another, and they suffer themselves in the wake of its psychological trauma. Prison is experienced by many women as yet another abusive relationship.

For many, circumstances of their abuse have implied to them that society will not protect them or their rights. They have felt rejected by and cast out from society. They have felt that they are somehow different and do not belong. Upon their arrival, they adhere to the concept that they have been discriminated against and that the laws imposed by society are biased. Feelings that they are of less importance or viewed as the weak link are carried over in their interactions with officials, authority figures, and inmates. They are prone to become involved in, or initiate, racial disturbances. They are apt to become rebellious and defiant of all the rules. They seek to show themselves superior in will or the exception to the rule. They are argumentative and show out with staff. They categorize people, demeaning them by occupation, sex, race, and religion. Societal anger is one of several recognized expressions of anger in prison.




Many women choose to handle their anger by repressing it, either because they fear the repercussions of others, or possibly their own lack of control over it. Some women will chastise themselves behind the myth that they (women) are not supposed to express themselves to any extent. As a result, they become enslaved. They are dominated by their anger, hate, fear, low self-esteem, lies, and distorted thinking. Those who suppress their anger long enough usually develop guilty feelings because they believe their anger is wrong. Unresolved anger has a way of influencing all the other areas of our lives. Its cause and effect is worthy of attention considering that, often times, the shame-based and resentful feelings of the individual will lead to relapse and/or re-incarceration. Repressing your anger is a hinderance to the personal growth and healing necessary for you to become the confident, able,

# NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT RARELY PRODUCES POSITIVE RESULTS

and liberated woman no longer a victim of life's little assaults. Misdirected or mismanaged anger, however, can be very detrimental, even deadly. There is a process for working all this out. There is a safe and acceptable approach to releasing your anger so that you can begin your journey toward total freedom of mind and body.

Prison is not necessarily a place of rehabilitation anymore, but it can be a place of reconciliation. There are programs and people available to help you target the problem areas of your life and resolve the conflict. One of the first things you have to do is be willing to accept the realities of your life. You have to do your time. It won't be easy, but the only way out is through. Relating back to the serenity prayer that is recited at the beginning of most AA meetings, accept the things you cannot change, change the things you can, and have the wisdom to know the difference. Always be open to change. Reassess your past beliefs and attitudes about the people, places, and things that are part of your life. As Ned Rollo said in his book *A Map Through The Maze*, "Keep what applies to you, what is true for you. Get rid of the lies and illusions. In this environment, if you are not willing to focus on personal growth the negative forces in and around you will decide who and what you are. If you are not sure of your own identity, then all you can do is react to other people's statements about you."

For a time after you first arrive, you are going to feel pretty unsure of yourself and uncomfortable. We come through those prison gates in turmoil. Coupled with the aggressive, inconsiderate behaviors of staff and inmates, the unreasonable and inconsistent operations within the system, the battery of negative and hostile communications, it is much easier than anticipated to fall prey to the drugs, homosexual

relationships, isolation, or angry confrontations as a method for coping. There is no doubt that knowing who we really are, knowing our values, having established principles that are just and unwavering is where our power is derived. Being able to rule our thoughts and feelings as a result of that allows us the strength to choose how we will live and to better direct our future. A majority of the people you will come in contact with in prison make a sport of pulling other's chains and playing on sympathies. Inmates and officers alike can be predators. For your peace of mind, begin learning to say no and set some firm boundaries to establish your respect.

If you've been listening to any "war stories" from the second and third time offenders in the county, then you have an awareness of the intrusive, power seeking individuals you'll be dealing with. They try to dazzle you with brilliance, baffle you with bullshit, or bulldog everyone into giving them what they want. Contrary to what the movies portray about prisoners, there are few accounts of any real violence among the women, just the persistent manipulation and intimidation. However, it's a good idea to stay aware of whether or not you may be pushing people's buttons. Often times, the silent, underlying tension could give way to outbursts of rage. There may be uprisings among the women that will be gang related, or having to do with the gamblers, or a select few who associate too closely with the officers. During certain times of the year, criteria will come out permitting a percentage of women to be released to the streets. Their beds will immediately be filled by women from Lexington or women returning from lower security facilities with misconducts. This transitional period can create a very stressful environment. The weeks preceding several women going up for parole, the holidays, and the seasons changing can also be difficult times to name a few. The level of tolerance drops and even the slightest discrepancies can escalate to physical confrontations. According to Rollo: "Learning to trust your awareness and judgement is essential for survival in and out of prison."

KNOWLEDGE

BEGINS WITH THE

RECOGNITION

OF THE

ABSENCE

THEREOF!!

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

It becomes increasingly more apparent that one of the most prevalent expressions of anger is the anger toward self. The anger for the things that we've done that brought harm and disappointment to the lives of those we love and to ourselves and the anger for the things that we have allowed to go unpunished, has been the compelling force through the years of moral decline that have brought us to the point at which we are today. Our inability to manage anger or attempts to repress it by providing ourselves with a virtual boutique of identities, or plunging into a torrent of destruction has brought us to the point of making or breaking. That is the choice left to you, one that you will need to make everyday. The realization is that there is a bitter root that's been planted in your life. It will continue to branch out and poison every area of your life if you do not uproot it. That root could be abuse, it could be the arrest, it could be a multitude of things. Make a decision to take control of your life. You can do that, even from within prison, with good reasoning abilities. Chart a course for your future by formulating ideas of who you want to be and where you want to be one year after your release, and take the action necessary to bring it to pass. No one can deny that going to prison or being abused is a crisis; but, you cannot emphasize the crisis for the rest of your life. Education about the things of your past can help you come to a place of acceptance with yourself and others. The dynamics of abuse, in its various forms, are low self-esteem, drug and alcohol addiction, severe mood swings, co-dependency, and irrational behaviors. A closer look at these will also reveal hidden aggressions. Take the time to do research on those things that pertain to your life. It can provide the insight you need to turn a potentially hazardous situation into something more beneficial.

A lot of us in prison have a tendency to expect the quick fixes or we give up. Don't try to move too fast through this process. You will burn out or drown in the debris of your past. To have substantial and lasting improvement in your life, remember that your current problems did not develop overnight. They are deep-seated, lingering disorders into which you have invested a great deal of time learning how to function with them. People in prison, people everywhere, can function; but, that doesn't mean they're free. Get out of the dorm and get involved in the programs available. Make a commitment to yourself to become an active participant in the programs and do it with as much honesty as is within your ability to give. If you feel yourself being drawn back into assuming those roles or accepting the conditioning that's been placed on you, take time out. The commitment to apply yourself and to grow, to heal, is for you. Because you want to be a good mother, a good wife, a good friend, a happy woman, and the best you can be, you commit to caring for you. You have the right to those things as much as anyone else. You deserve them and you have the ability to attain them. Some people have a natural ability to write poetry, some people have a natural ability to parent. Those who want to develop those abilities go to creative writing classes or parenting classes. You will find that you are not alone in your feelings of anger, fear,

inadequacy, guilt, or shame. You will find a support system within the groups you attend and, often times, referrals for continued support or counseling after your release. In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, "Freedom is what you do with what's been done to you."

Releasing anger is necessary for anyone and something you can expect to be communicated on a daily basis in your environment. If you're having conflicts with someone, remember that most people don't continue to go around having tantrums if they are not encouraged to do so. Don't juice people by throwing around blame, name calling, and back-biting. Such behaviors spread like wildfire between women. There are those who go looking for trouble and those with whom your personality may simply clash for no particular reason. If possible, avoid close interactions with those types of people without rewarding and reinforcing their behavior toward you by allowing them to intimidate you. Exercise assertive, not aggressive, behaviors. Use "I" statements in your communications, i.e. I hear you saying..., I feel that..., etc. In disagreements, if a person is not being urged on by feelings of rage, they are able to keep a focus on the issues at hand and express their needs more precisely. They are less likely to feel they are being taken advantage of. You can try to defuse the situation for the moment by keeping your voice calm and level. Allow some time to pass if possible. Solutions come when you are not enraged.

## PREPARING FOR PRE-RELEASE CENTERS

Establishing a more rewarding and satisfying life begins here and now, not upon release. You will frequently hear the remark, "After I get out, things will be better." To make that happen, you should begin instituting changes today. The knowledge you can gain about yourself in Daily Living Skills will help you acquire resources to obtain and build a foundation for living. Also, the notable changes in you will be your stronghold through the system, and the credentials you need to open doors after your release. If you are just wandering aimlessly through this time as opposed to setting goals for yourself and creating the framework for becoming the person that can attain and maintain those goals, the system is beating you. You are wasting valuable time and resources that could benefit you. You are also leaving yourself open to predators and getting comfortable with the prison lifestyle. If you adapt to prison mentality, you are in trouble. Remember, battles are won in the mind.

Education is a most valuable tool. Opportunity for that in today's system is limited to an extent, due in part to the overcrowding and lack of adequate funding. Consequently, those with parole stipulations and those meeting a sometimes rigid criteria, will be considered first. The medium and maximum security facilities will offer programs, post secondary education, and college tele-courses that work-release centers and halfway houses will not. You will also find that a great deal of valuable information and resourceful study is available through your leisure and law libraries provided at only the medium and maximum facilities. Transport from lower securities to a higher security is done periodically for the purpose of legal research. It is your right to have access to that information. However, don't rest on your laurels thinking anything is made simple through the Department of Corrections.

If you are likely to sign a packet for transfer to a halfway house or a community work release, take the following suggestions and prepare yourself for what's ahead as best you can. But you have to always remember that these places are extensions of the penitentiary, not extensions of the community. According to Ned Rollo in his book, *A Map Through The Maze*, "They should be viewed as the last part of your sentence, not the first part of your release."

During interviews to coordinate this segment, there were primarily three questions presented to women, some who have been completely through the system and back, and some who are anticipating transfer to pre-release centers for the first time.

1.) What do they honestly feel they need from the system (pre-release facilitators) to prepare them for the psychological, social, and financial demands ahead?

2.) What are some of the dangerous situations to be avoided?

3.) What are some of the feelings they will be faced with?

Leslie Smith's answer to the first question was honesty. She elaborates by saying, "Honestly, most people don't realize how quickly one can become institutionalized. The facilitators need to recognize signs and symptoms of the women who have this problem and help them see this. Most women don't have a clue how to manage a budget. Turn them loose in a grocery store upon release and watch how many "new" brands of cereal end up in their basket. You can also find them hours later in the hygiene and hair care section, mouths agape, unable to decide what they need as opposed to what they want. There is also a greater need for psychological help other than what D.O.C. provides. The D.O.C.'s answer to stress, anxiety, anger, and frustration leans toward Elavil, Vistaril, and Mellaril, now let's get real. Forget social functions, "Hey, what's up, ya' got a joint," doesn't sit well at job interviews, or running through the parking lot to be first in line at Denny's, McDonalds, or Western Sizzlin."

In answer to the second question, she believes overconfidence to be one of the dangers women face. "Overconfidence, the ones who say, "You'll never see me here again," look for them first. They are usually the ones who have just learned to avoid the law a little longer. They've honed their skills, and now have new ones to boot. Never, under any circumstances, believe that one to eight or nine years in the pen has cured you of your addictions, be it money, sex, drugs, gambling, or alcohol. If you really don't want to quit, your incarceration has just made you a "frustrated alcoholic" and you will walk through the gates searching for the nearest liquor store.

Getting caught up in nineteen different reintegration programs at once overwhelms the mind and tends to confuse a person right back to drugs and alcohol. It's hard enough to remember what your classes are, MRT, RBT, AA, NA, CA, F.O.R.T., TADD, let alone what you are learning and how to use the skills. Rehab for drugs and alcohol work only if you want to quit. Penitentiary Bible thumpers and prison ministry is also dangerous to weak minded and easily influenced people. Church groups, one every night, every denomination, does not offer you a pass to freedom. It also does not assist you in making friends as you force your new found Bible knowledge down your roommate's throat or anyone else's that will listen."

When asked about the feelings women could expect to face, she emphasizes the flood of mixed emotions. "Feelings. Yes, all at one time. Most of us grew up suppressing our feelings. Now, after a few years of forced sobriety, we are beginning to have feelings, and believe me, they don't come out one at a time. I personally got three or four at once and didn't know whether to laugh or cry, be mad, sad, or glad, so I had panic attacks instead. This is hard on the heart and not recommended. In my case, I became clinically depressed and suicidal. Yes, I had my life mapped out, planned out, and under control. Think long and hard before making any immediate changes upon release. Hell, your life is a stake."

Jennifer Christine Alexander expresses her opinion by saying, "Women need to learn how to deal with emotions," i.e. anger management, "what to expect from the real world," such as reintegration classes, "and they need to prepare for doors closing when applying for jobs." The author suggests alternate sources or several resources for supporting yourself financially, not "trick" situations or men you've already dumped once.

The potential dangers that Jennifer foresees are "troublemakers, drugs, and violence. Expect anxiety, loneliness, fear, confusion, and frustration with the system."

At work releases, drugs are readily available. Many women will try to set you up or trick off your time by attempting to involve you in their games. Misery loves company. They will attempt to get you involved in gossip, drug use, or relationships with men or women that will cause you problems. You could become guilty by association.

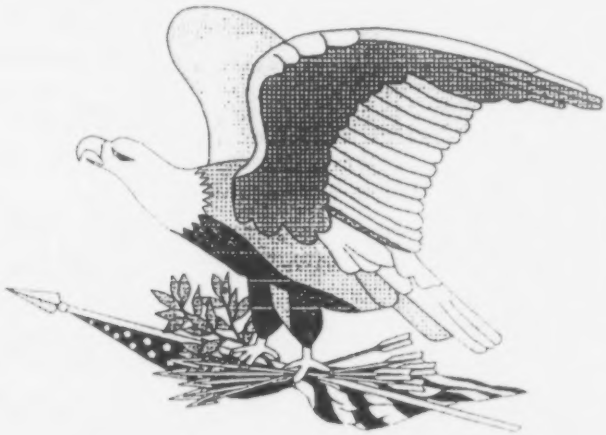
Another female inmate, Terri North, responded by stating the following: "After being locked up for over five and a half straight calendar years, what I need from pre-release facilitators is their support, confidence, and a positive attitude toward my success. In prison, inmates are most always treated as "losers" and receive only negative attention. As I get closer to my release back into society, I need positive reinforcements. Tell me what's expected of me. Treat me as a person fixing to enter society, not as a person being kept away from it.

It's kind of like when you tell a child who's misbehaving that he is bad. Well, he'll sure try to live up to that expectation you so easily placed on him. Believe that I'm a winner, then watch me win!

Gradually release me into society. I've been completely out of it for years and, in some cases, I never learned how to do simple everyday things.

Not until my incarceration did I learn how to keep and succeed with a full-time straight job. I have learned responsibility; please hold me to it. Don't baby me or tell me every single thing to do, but, guide me. Ask if I need help or have questions.

Believe in me and stay positive. I don't want to return to prison either. I need you, a responsible, successful citizen, to treat me as your equal and believe in my success, because I'll be learning it from you, my role model."



## A CASE HISTORY: MAKING A MISTAKE IS NO EXCUSE FOR LIVING ONE

by Dorita Pemberton

After approximately two years of incarceration, I was released to a halfway house. I'd been through maximum/medium and minimum securities and all of a sudden I was one of only a few women who had actually come from out of prison to the shabby conditions of this place that D.O.C. chose to use as a half-way placement. The staff was aware that I had been awake for nearly 23 hours making this transition, but still I was expected to participate in the evening activities before I was allowed to sleep. I was exhausted. I considered myself to be strong-minded, accepting of the responsibilities it would take to succeed in the free-world, and having reasonable goals set to reach my ultimate desire and conditions for living. Man, was I wrong! I had always been good at organizing, I was very thorough and meticulous. I had always been good at coordinating the necessary activities of my day and plans for the near future. I realized at that point that I couldn't even coordinate my clothes closet after being limited to basically seven outfits. At least not like I had been used to when my nail polish matched my make-up, my jewelry was specifically coordinated to each silk dress or designer denim, and when I had more shoes to select from than a caterpillar has feet. My routine there was demanding and most all of the activities I was expected to attend were something new and different to me. I was still under strict curfews and observation. I operated on an itinerary having to second guess the bus system or a transport system used mostly by the homeless in the area. I was released without a thin dime to my name because I was still property of the Department of Corrections and was not eligible for the $50.00 check given to those who discharge their time. The requirements for receiving that money wasn't made known to me prior to my last minute preparations for leaving. I hadn't secured another means of temporary support. My family had turned their backs on me and my precarious behaviors long before, so all the way through the system, I had tried to tend to any needs on my own and still was. I was expected to work, expected to take off work to see my parole officer, and expected to be back at the halfway house for the early evening programs or lose my privileges. What privileges? Between the demands of my parole officer and the separate, sometimes conflicting, demands of the halfway house, I had no privileges. The house was located in a bad area of town, little industrialization or decent job opportunities. The treatment I received from facilitators was that of a parasite or an inmate that was now even more of an escape risk. They anticipated nothing but devious behavior. The treatment I received from the men I was around was that of some hot little tramp with a focus only as far as the bedroom (maybe even their bedroom) since I'd been in prison. I spent days walking in high heels and a dress looking for any job prospects nearby. I met

with nothing but discouragement even though I'd never had trouble finding a job before. But this time I was realizing that I had set myself up to fail, emotionally speaking. The system had also set me up to fail. I was mad because it seemed that no one really cared if I made it, and I remembered the officer that signed my release papers from minimum security telling me that he would see me again soon. I was terrified at the disappointments I was facing and my feelings of inadequacy. I had seen that I was no longer confident or able to do simple things that I hadn't thought twice about before. I was alone, lonely, and felt alienated from the rest of society. I had changed my playground and playmates, which I thought I was better off to do, by moving to another town, completely new to me, leaving friends and family alike behind. I was exhausted from every aspect of the word, trying to keep up a daily pace and maintain such responsibilities as had been "the norm" for me before. I was confused because it seemed that the more I tried to advance on my dreams, the more obstacles I was having to overcome before I could claim any progress. Those things I had thought would be readily available to me, were not. Organizations and support groups were of little or no help. Others expectations of me had become something I hadn't anticipated. My skill and stamina was not what it had been. Suddenly, it seemed like my ideas of what life could be, at least for me, were asinine, and I felt disoriented. Although I found a job with in less than one month, it had been the little complications that made the big difference. I was emotionally bankrupt. So many things had flooded through my mind that I couldn't see a way to begin or a possible end. I had to find someone to cash my first payroll check because any forms of identification were lost at the time of my arrest. Once I had the money in my hand the party crowd was calling my name. At that point, it had become easier for me to marinate in my weaknesses, and that's exactly what I did for the next seven days. After having to be medically detoxed for D.T.'s, I was admitted to a treatment center under the instruction of my parole officer, and for the next eight months, I nurtured a bitterness. I was also subconsciously feeding that same old defiant attitude that again turned out to be quite a captivating performance, which landed me back in prison for another sixteen months. Unfortunately, a lot of these experiences are not uncommon or unfamiliar to women who have been in the system. Don't just assume yourself uniquely different, do everything you can to try and make sure of it.

Starting over with nothing takes hard work and patience. This is your responsibility to yourself and your future dreams. There are no quick fixes. Change is not usually easy for anyone, and you can't expect a lot of free time at first. You'll probably get half as much done in twice the time. If at any point you can get pointers on how to manage time, energy, and money, do so. Try to put together a resume, and acquire some form of identification for after release, such as your birth certificate and a state I.D. The cost will be approximately $20.00 total. You will have more access to computers, typewriters, and

directories in higher securities. You should concentrate on the small accomplishments at first. Remind yourself that you have come a long way. Be prepared for disappointments, but never expect defeat. The larger part of society has no indication of what prison is really like and no guarantee that you could be an exception to the reports printed in the paper about inmates or statistics that exploit further offenses of parolees. You will have to prove yourself. Hold your head up and go forward, making a mistake is no excuse for living one.

**If you place a small value on yourself, rest assured the world will not raise your price.**

# CHAPTER FOUR:

# LOW SELF-ESTEEM

by Keeva Clayton

One of the common factors among incarcerated women is low self-esteem. This may originate from many different things, but in talking to many women at several different facilities, a very high percentage of them were abused in one way or another during their formative years, birth to age eight. Statistics state that 85% of incarcerated women were abused during their childhood, 65% of these were in the form of sexual abuse with ⅔ of this abuse experienced as children. When a child is subjected to abuse of any type, emotional trauma may occur. The effects of this abuse may or may not become evident in one's life; but, if it does show itself, it's usually with disastrous results. Abuse in itself is enough to cause a sense of low self-worth in a person, but it seems that the more severe cases of low self-esteem occur in survivors of sexual abuse. The early childhood years are very important in forming a healthy sense of self. When a person is subjected to abuse in any shape or form, this is the only type of love they know. Therefore, their sense of love and self is usually sought through outside factors, instead of inside of one's self, where healthy love and sense of self originates. A child that is reared being told that they will never amount to anything distorts the way they will view themselves. In the case of survivors of sexual abuse, most women seek their sense of self through others, in some cases, men. This may cause a severe dependence on men, usually abusive ones.

The signs of low self-esteem in a person can be many and varied, some being more obvious than others. Some of these signs may be alcoholism, drug abuse or addiction, eating disorders, abusive relationships, multiple marriages, depression, suicidal tendencies, religious addictions, incarceration, and especially multiple incarcerations.

Many women are not even aware that they suffer from low self-esteem. They may know that something is wrong, that they are not happy, but they lay the blame on outside factors. They may bitch and moan about their circumstances and the prison environment, but few are willing to work on the real problem, which lies within themselves. You hear, "If I could just get out of here, everything would be fine." You must learn to be free where ever you are, regardless of your circumstances, whether in prison or in the free-world. If you can learn to be free intellectually and spiritually, then you can be free no matter where you are. This will probably take much time and effort on your part. Remember, you didn't get to where you are in life overnight. You won't be able to change the circumstances of your life in a week or a month. Change takes time and is a never-ending process.

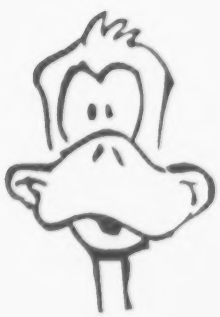
"To be truly present wherever you are, don't waste, abuse, or misuse your time while here on earth. It is a non-refundable product."

WORK ON YOURSELF

Many women are not to the point that they can even begin to work on themselves because they are still in a state of denial. However, if you have made the conscious decision to do something different with your life, now is the time to start, not tomorrow. Persons with low self-esteem are excellent procrastinators.

Once you come to the conclusion that you suffer from low self-esteem and feel that you are ready to make changes in your life, you must commit yourself to making those changes. Be forewarned that the process is going to be a painful one and it will not be easy. You must be willing to take a good look at yourself and what lies inside. You must be willing to admit fault and take responsibilities for your actions, instead of blaming the system and everyone else. You must then be willing to take the steps necessary to institute these changes. You may catch hell from those around you, your family, and your peers (especially your peers, misery loves company!). Detractors such as these are the ones that probably contributed to your down fall and have actively helped to keep you down. You, and you alone, are the only one that can make a change.

# Are You An Eagle?



# With a Yardbird Mentality?

EDUCATION IS THE KEY

During your incarceration, there are many things that you can do to start on the journey to finding one's self. Education is a primary example. Most prisons, work releases excluded, have a Literacy, ABE, or GED program that is very effective. The instructors are not only qualified, but they are dedicated and caring, as are the tutors. I would urge you to build a relationship with your instructors, as they are there to help you. If you can, get into school full-time and apply yourself. Education is something that you achieve on your own. You may get guidance from others, but the work is done by you. Once you begin to see improvement in test scores, this should begin to instill some sense of self-worth. It will prove to you that you can accomplish something positive. In talking with women who have gone through the education program at this facility, they were all in agreement that attaining their GED was a major step in the foundation of self-esteem and maturity.

If you have your high school diploma, you may want to look into getting into a vocational/technical program. If this doesn't interest you, get a job that will keep your mind alive. True, the jobs available in prison may not provide you with marketable job skills, but it will provide you with the discipline required for a real job upon your release. And God knows that most of us are lacking in discipline! A job will help you get used to getting up every morning, preparing yourself, and working all day.

Take advantage of self-help and support groups. NA, AA, adult survivor groups, and others are common in prisons, as are Bible studies. If you feel that you need counseling, the psychologists and psychiatrists are at your disposal and are generally familiar with the issues that inmates are going through. If you find it difficult to get into see them, you might want to try an officer. Believe it or not, most of them are willing to listen to you and are in the corrections field because they want to help people. If you find this hard to believe, just ask one sometime.

In the state of Oklahoma, there is only one treatment program for women, "New Beginnings" at MBCC. This program is designed specifically for survivors of abuse and space in this program is limited. If you make your needs known to your case manager, there is a possibility of your getting into this program. Only fifteen are accepted three times a year. If you don't have the opportunity to participate in this program, there are many books dealing with the issue of sexual abuse. Consult your librarian for help or seek others who seem to have dealt with their own issues. The women who have dealt with the baggage associated with being an adult survivor are usually open about the abuse and willing to talk about it and help others get through their feelings. These survivors no longer feel shameful about the abuse.

If you have any creative abilities, the ability to draw, act, write, or sing, take the time during your incarceration to nurture these God given gifts. Most institutions have a creative writing class or club, and since you have free time on your hands (even if you are working or going to school), work on these abilities. In doing this, you will nurture your soul.

If you find yourself getting depressed, or falling into old behaviors or thought processes, talk to someone. If the person you choose to talk with does not help, do not talk with this person, even if it's your mother, your spouse, or some other family member. Find someone positive to talk to.

*Success is not a function of what you start with materially, but what you start with spiritually.*

*Herman Cain,*
*CEO Godfathers Pizza*

KEEP A DAILY JOURNAL

Another good way to increase your self-esteem is to keep a journal. When writing in it, remember that it is for your eyes only and be totally honest with yourself. Write about the events of the day and how they made you feel. Go back over your journal, notice the things that made you feel bad. Then, see if there was a way you could have done things differently to keep from feeling bad about yourself. After several months of monitoring your behavior in this manner, you should be able to notice a change and a pattern of growth within yourself.

The quest for self and self-esteem is going to be a difficult and painful one. But the end result is guaranteed to be rewarding. You must reassess your priorities and your life. For many years, even after the birth of my children, I was my one and only priority. I was very selfish in my behavior. One day, I was asked by a staff member, "If you don't value yourself or your family enough to keep yourself out of here (this was during my third incarceration), why are your children not important enough for you to stay out of here?" This question really got me to thinking. After several hours of pondering this issue, I came to the conclusion that my children were a hinderance to my lifestyle. After reaching this conclusion, I thought more on this issue and reached a very painful conclusion. A conclusion that I was as selfish as my father had been, seeking self-gratification at all costs, even the emotional welfare of my children. I was just like my father. This hurt. And from that point on, I decided that I had to change. I started taking responsibilities for my actions, and from that day forward, my children came first in my life. I could still have my own interests, healthy ones this time, the theater, my writing, but my children will come first. This decision has raised my self-esteem. For the first time in my life, I had decided to take responsibility for my actions. Thus, I have finally started to grow.

## Are your children an inconvenience at times? If so, then you are...

**1. Selfish**

**2. Self-Centered**

**3. Self-Indulgent**

GROWTH IS CHANGE AND CHANGE IS DIFFICULT

Most of us have lived with the same mind set all our lives and have become comfortable in our misery. Change takes courage, perserverence, and time, which all of you have. It takes courage to admit to yourself that you have been a lousy mother, wife, or daughter. But, to decide to change and then to work toward that goal is very rewarding and fulfilling. You must begin today to value yourself as much as you used to value other things, i.e. drugs, men, gangs, etc. If you do not have a high value of yourself, rest assured, the world will not place value in you. Building self-esteem begins now, today. Granted, the journey will be a painful one, but the reward of loving yourself is worth all of the pain in the world. Self-worth is self-caring.

# Steps To

# Reconciliation of Problems

## 1. Learn from the mistakes of the past

## 2. Accept the reality of the present

## 3. Prepare to influence future

## A CASE HISTORY: LOW SELF-ESTEEM

by Keeva Clayton

I have suffered from low self-esteem all of my life. I feel that this low self-esteem originated at the age of six when my father began sexually molesting me. At the age of eleven, when I told my mother about the abuse, the sexual abuse stopped and the verbal, emotional, and physical abuse started. At the time of the abuse, the way I dealt with it was to disassociate. From age six to eleven while the sexual abuse was occurring, I can remember that I would count until the incident was over. The sexual abuse planted seeds of conflicting feelings and emotions deep inside of me. It gave me twisted views of my sexuality and sense of self. I lost myself before I even had a chance to discover who I was. These episodes of abuse taught me at an early age to seek self-gratification at the cost of everything else. Children are taught by example, and this was the example I was given. Since a person's value system is formed by the age of seven or eight, by the age of eleven, my value system was extremely twisted.

In the following six years, until I left home at the age of seventeen, the nails in my coffin of low self-esteem were hammered in one by one. Whenever my father would come home drunk (which was often; he was, and still is, an alcoholic), he would verbally slander me, consistently reinforcing that I was a "slut," that I would never amount to anything, that I was a f--king bitch, etc. My interest in the theater was squashed, as opposed to being nurtured. "Only sluts and whores are actresses, only weirdos," was one of my father's favorite quotes. I would end up in tears after one of these arguments, behind the closed door of my bedroom. I would ask myself, "How could I be a slut? I wasn't even sexually active with any other men." From the ages of six to fourteen, I used books as my escape mechanism. After that, I used the theater, which increased my father's anger. I never had any healthy child play that I can remember, I didn't even play with dolls without undressing them and making them have sex. Play therapy observed by a qualified therapist would more than likely have revealed the sexual abuse long before I did. Another point I would like to make before I go on is the fact that every time my father was in the process of abusing me, he would tell me that he loved me and that I mustn't tell, because if I did, we would both get in trouble. So, my sense of self, love, and sexuality were not developed in a healthy manner.

As I mentioned before, I discovered the theater at the age of fourteen when the verbal abuse was at its height. The theater was an excellent escape mechanism, as I could immerse myself in my roles since I had no sense of self anyway. I could also be accepted by my peers. Since I wasn't accepted at home, this was important to me.

At the age of seventeen I graduated from high school, and no longer having the escape of theater at my fingertips, I began using sex and drugs as my escape hatch, thus re-establishing my low self-esteem, bringing it lower and lower. I became the "slut" that my father had always told me I was. Since the only time that my father ever told me he loved me was when he was molesting me, the ideas of love and sex were

interchangeable to me. I thought that if I were screwing someone that they loved me. I would have sex with a guy once or twice, he would dump me, and my self-esteem would drop another notch. I would fall "in love" with a man after one meeting, get dumped, then be destroyed. This happened time and time again. Then I would use drugs to avoid more pain and try to bring myself back up. The drugs would work, but only temporarily. So it became a vicious cycle, taking more drugs and more sex, just to feel like I was worth a shit.

In 1980, I got married for the first time and had my first child. I didn't use drugs during this time, but once I got divorced, the drug abuse started. Within six months, I had lost my daughter to my ex-husband who has had her ever since. (Today, she is sixteen years old and I am just now beginning to build a relationship with her.) The next seven years were spent in a drug haze. I discovered the rush that went along with injecting and smoking drugs, and I lost any link I had with reality of life itself. I sold my body to obtain the money for the drugs. Thus, what minute bit of self-esteem or self-awareness that I had, dissolved, this time of my own accord.

When I was twenty-seven, I met the man who would become my second husband and the father of my next three children. He was a pot dealer and I was tired of "hard drugs." This was an ideal situation for me. I considered it a set-up. I moved in with him the day after I met him. We rented a house and I went about "domestic duties", cooking, cleaning, having babies, and of course, smoking a lot of pot. Five years later, I had three more children and was back to injecting drugs. I abandoned my responsibilities as a wife and mother to go back to prostitution and drugs, feeling that this was the "right" thing to do so as not to expose my children to these things. At the time, perhaps it was the right thing to do as I probably would have done my children more harm by staying with them as opposed to leaving them.

The next fifteen years was more of the same. I learned that I could make a lot of money "selling myself," which meant more money for more drugs. During this period, I had eight abortions, five children, three broken marriages, and went through three drug treatment centers (never completing one). I neglected my husbands and I neglected my children seeking self-gratification at all costs. I treated my husbands like dirt and basically ignored the children I bore. More importantly, I treated myself like dirt and neglected myself. These events just reinforced the steel bars of the prison I had put myself in. I had turned out to be just like my father whose behavior I detested.

In 1992, I went to prison for the first time on drug charges. I got three years, went through the F.O.R.T. program, and got out on pre-parole. I immediately left the state and was picked up on escape charges. They gave me two years running consecutive with my three and I spent the next nineteen months doing that time. During this incarceration, I went through a treatment program for adult survivors of sexual abuse. It helped me deal with the majority of the pain that was a result of the abuse, but it did nothing for my low self-esteem. During the incarceration I had my fifth, and last, child as I had gotten pregnant while I was on escape. I discharged this time on my 34TH birthday and immediately went to live with a man whom I had met through the mail during my incarceration. Another stupid move on my part, but what else can

you do when you don't know any different? This man turned out to be just as insane in his thinking as I was, mentally torturing not only myself, but my child as well. This I couldn't tolerate, so, slipping into old behaviors, I began using again. This time it was prescription pills. This ended with my child being taken by the Department of Human Services. One more bar for my prison.

At this time in my life, a friend of mine introduced me to God, and never being one to do anything half way, I dove into religion. I enrolled in a missionary training school and, once again, avoided everything, this time with something that was more "socially acceptable" than the prostitution or the drugs. While there, I met a man, and within three months I was once again married. We began to smoke a little pot, justifying it in our minds as an "herb". We made plans to move out of the school, my mother having agreed to pay our deposit and first months rent on an apartment. We found an apartment and made plans to get jobs. The week before we moved in, my husband, a recovering alcoholic, began to try to persuade me to drink on the day we had planned to move in, saying that he wanted to see me drunk. In the back of my mind, I knew that he was wanting an excuse to drink and that would provide him with one. He kept at me, and finally, I gave in. The day we moved in, we bought a bottle and he had a cocktail with me. Within half an hour, we were in an argument. Within two hours, I had a bloody nose, a busted lip, and a broken jaw. I snuck out of the house, called the police, and went to the emergency room. I had him arrested, but because of laws, he was out of jail within twenty-four hours and back at the apartment harassing me. Within that twenty-four hours, he was back drinking and using drugs heavily. I insisted that he check himself into a detox, and he did. After he was there for a week, I took him back into my life with promises that such a thing would never happen again. I got two jobs while he stayed home and did nothing. I resented this and him and proceeded to get angry. Two weeks later, he threatened to kill me and I left him, this time for good. I called a friend of mine that I had been in prison with before and she offered to let me stay with her. Upon arriving at her apartment, she went into her bathroom, pulled out a syringe, and offered me a shot of heroin. Of course, I accepted and that was the beginning of my last merry-go-round ride. Within a week, we were both prostituting and using both heroin and cocaine. Six months later, I found my self once again in county jail, once again facing a prison sentence. It was at this time that I finally did some soul-searching and came to several conclusions and realizations about myself and my life. I realized that I had never been given the opportunity to know who or what I was and that it was up to me to make this discovery, that no one could or would do it for me. I also finally forgave my father, my mother, and more importantly, myself for the abuse.

I am still in prison and searching for who I am. But today, I realize that I am not what I have been doing for the last twenty years of my life. This realization in itself has begun to release me from the prison that I have dwelt in for the past twenty years. And knowing that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, gives me the hope and faith that I need to persist in my quest for self. Another reason that I feel better about myself today is that I have also made the commitment to not do to my own children what my

father did to me. I will not emotionally damage my children any more than I already have. I have finally decided to take responsibility for my actions of having born five children and my failure to be there for them. I am lucky and blessed enough that my children are all still a part of my life and I have the opportunity to be a mother to them. How can one expect to feel good about themselves when they are guilt ridden about shirked responsibilities? In my mind, you can't. In my opinion, raising one's self-esteem is a mind set. It's a matter of making choices. You are the only one who can decide whether or not you want to spend the rest of your life miserable, in and out of prison, or content with who and what you are.

**When you go for the prize of your life, you don't stop to count the horses.**

**Chief Joseph**
**Circa 1880**

If I have the choice of dealing with an evil person or a fool, I would choose evil... there is hope.

with the fool... there is none.

# CHAPTER FIVE:

# THE POWERLESS

by Leslie Smith

Step one in AA, NA, and CA says, "We admitted we were powerless and that our lives had become unmanageable." In order to overcome our addictions, we must do this. Now, place yourself inside a correctional facility and admit you are powerless. In all sense of the word, you have become without power. Yet, to admit powerlessness, let alone show this to your peers, is unthinkable.

Powerlessness and unmanageability go hand in hand; otherwise, 99.9% of incarcerated women would not be where they are. Battered women, drug addicts, shoplifters, child abusers, bad check writers, forgers, car thieves, gang members, and murderers are powerless over their lives and what they have become. In order for women with no education, no formal job training, or no means to obtain an income to get by, irrational ideas and thinking must take place, and thus, be carried out. This is the easy way out and the easy way to a quick and abundant cash flow.

Fear places most women into powerless and unmanageable lifestyles. Fear of not being able to adequately support their children, in most instances, single adult households. Again, society places the wants of children above their needs and security. Needs (food, clothing, and shelter) have been replaced by wants (Nike, Nintendo, and Nieman Marcus). We are considered unfit, uncaring, and poor providers if these "wants" are not provided. Therefore, our children's values have been pro-rated and the vicious cycle continues.

Now, take away your stability and you have chaos. Incarceration forces you to extreme powerlessness. Fights break out for little or no reason than just trying to hang onto a little bit of control. When we can wash our clothes, when we can bathe or primp in front of the mirror, when we can heat up our coffee, or cook our Ramen noodles are just some of the petty reasons that women fuss, fight, and argue. But, it is the only control that is left to us in these warehouses for women. Small things become immense in the struggle for control.

Abuse, be it physical, mental, or emotional, instills powerlessness into women at an early age. Women who suffer abuse go through their life feeling betrayed, angry, intimidated, humiliated, and like meek little mice with no control over anything. All sense of security, in every sense of the word, is stripped leaving an empty husk with no purpose or direction in life. When adulthood is reached and these women are cast into roles of motherhood, they tend to seek the same types of relationships because no responsibility or independence has been established.

Poor self-esteem leaves us unmotivated and resigned to our lot in life. A glimpse of glamour, money, or power soon turns reality into fantasy and the only way to attain this lifestyle is through easy money, get-rich-quick schemes, or crime.

So, how do you overcome these feelings of powerlessness? Set goals, seek support groups, get therapy, get informed. The more you know about what is happening to you as an individual, the better your chances are of overcoming. Powerlessness vs. powerless. Are you without power or is an addiction you have holding all the cards, having all the power?

**WE ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT WE THINK WE ARE; BUT WHAT WE *THINK*, WE ARE.**

THE MANIPULATORS

Behind every good woman is manipulation. All women use it to get what they want, be it from men, other women, or even their children. From the beginning, women were to be seen and not heard, so..."powers of persuasion" came into play.

Cleopatra, Delilah, Marie Antionette, and Hillary Clinton were all "the brains behind the balls." To put it simply, they got what they wanted by coercion and manipulation. In days of old, women were treated much like the children of today, it's okay to be seen, but not heard. They were thought to have no brains of their own; therefore, they were not taken seriously. Even though women scream for equal rights, they still are not taken seriously in the home, work force, or society in general. Only in the bedroom do we have an equal partnership.

One of the biggest fears of incarcerated women is to be used and manipulated. We fear friendship or personal relationships of any kind because we don't know if it's real or if it's what we possess. Are they being nice to me because I have something they want, or they want me to do something for them? Very few real friendships develop because of this fear. Most women have the attitude that they came in by themselves and they will leave by themselves. In the course of a relationship, the used often become the user as the fight for survival continues.

Staff and inmates are often the manipulators as well as the manipulated. The saying goes, "they will use you up and then spit you out." Put male correctional officers into a female correctional facility and sit back and watch what happens. Women placed in this new role are very vulnerable and sometimes seek sympathy in inappropriate ways. The "poor me" syndrome is used on staff and other inmates to seek approval, love (misplaced), and acceptance. It is frightening, but it is a reality that there are men out there who would use this situation for sex, information, or their distorted version of power. Most women with low self-esteem or that have come from dysfunctional homes sometimes think of sex as love, and this can, and is, used against them. Why else would a free-world man want a relationship with an incarcerated woman? I guarantee it's not a relationship based on trust and loyalty.

Powerlessness and manipulation go hand in hand in a correctional facility setting. When a woman is stripped of her power and control, a strange and frightening metamorphosis takes place. It becomes, "I'll get them before they get me." Planning and scheming are a daily necessity. Wants become needs! It's amazing what a woman will go through to ensure she has her zoo-zoo's and wham-wham's. There are a lot of necessary steps in the process to achieve these goals. If there is no cash flow, then a B.S. story must be thought up to get the sympathy needed to obtain a temporary loan, one that is never intended to be paid back. And now for the rest of the story...

As humourous and far fetched as this may seem, life in the penitentiary is a life and dearth struggle. Some people call it "running game". But, when you are placed in a no-win situation and all your dignity and self-worth are taken from you, then no lie, no game, no form of manipulation is beneath anyone. It becomes, "the survival of the fittest."

**THERE ARE TWO WAYS YOU**

**CAN LIVE YOUR LIFE**

✦✦✦✦✦

**LOOKING IN FRONT OF YOU**

**OR**

**LOOKING OVER YOUR**

**SHOULDER**

THE ENABLERS: PENITENTIARY RELIGION

Penitentiary religion is so controversial it's hard to know who is for real and who is there for the credits. Let's face it, the penitentiary chapels are not full to overcrowded unless credits are given. Granted, women, myself included, need spiritual guidance. There are a chosen few who "practice what they preach," and actually carry their religious beliefs to the street with them when they go.

However, there is more to religion than toting around a Bible and proclaiming to all that will listen, "Jesus loves you." I'm thirty seven years old, and three years ago I couldn't tell you the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, let alone, what any of Jesus' parables were all about.

Penitentiary Christians are led to receive part of the Christian faith while rejecting other essential truths. They profess to accept Jesus as the Son of God, to believe in his death and resurrection; yet, they have no conviction of sin and feel no need of repentance or change of heart. These we call "cereal Christians," fruits and nuts.

Then we have Christians who straddle the fence. They have habits or addictions they aren't quite ready to give up, but they praise God and verbally claim, for all to hear, a desire to change. If this were true, they would be on their knees, praying to God, to remove these shortcomings. Shall we just give a number to each excuse and they can throw out a number instead of taking the time to explain the why's and the why not's, e.g. "I wasn't in church today because, number 16."

Now for the selected few. These women were raised with God in their hearts and on their mind. They practice their beliefs in all their affairs and believe they will go to heaven with the Grace of God. To maintain peace and serenity while incarcerated is a miraculous feat in itself. One must be willing to overlook some of the obstacles such as peer pressure and negative feedback from outside friends and family. Let's face it, if you were drinking a fifth of Erk and Jerk a day, and had gone through every thing you owned to get a fix, then you suddenly find salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, your family is not going to be real receptive to the idea that you have changed and are a new creature in Christ.

Peer pressure is one of the biggest obstacles a woman has to face during incarceration. Humiliation, rejection, snide remarks, disbelief, and jealousy are among the few things that one will have to deal with. But, stand firm and anyone that matters will soon see that you are for real. For this to happen, you will need a backbone of concrete or you will float around like a jellyfish with the majority of the population. We don't need to build our lives on a spiritual experience or a so-called revelation. We need to build it on a sure foundation, God's word. "The grass withereth ..but the word of God shall stand forever," Isaiah 40:8.

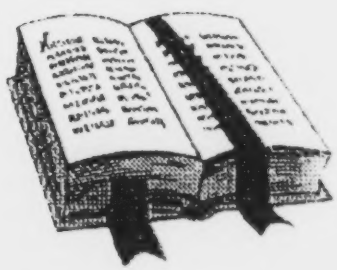
The religious services offered are abundant; but, the Department of Corrections cannot satisfy everyone. Variety differs from institution to institution and week to week. There are no guarantees that there will be an Islam service or Peyote cults for Native Americans, but keep the faith.

Through faith, successful Christians throughout history have subdued kingdoms. Faith is the key. You can't subdue anything of significance if you haven't first subdued the little things in your life. Anyone who conquers the impossibilities of life will always appear bolder than those who stand idly by talking about their problems. You don't have to say a word to justify yourself, just back up your words with action. Remember, the Bible says, "When all else fails, Stand."

Furthermore, the apostle warned his brethren that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work," 2 Thessalonians 2:7. Even at that early date, he saw, creeping into the church, errors that would prepare the way for the development of that gigantic system of Christianity where heresy and apostasy were already at work. The "Flim Flam" men and the Elmer Gantry's of the world permeate the land-scape throughout the prison system. Some have been known to openly recruit females while supposedly doing "God's work" on the compound. Don't be fooled by the hypocrisy of these false prophets and their attempts at becoming your next enabler. You have enough problems without their unsolicited attention.

*BE YE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD BUT BE YE TRANSFORMED BY RENEWING OF THE MIND.*

*ROMANS 12:2*



A CASE STUDY: LESLIE SMITH

All incarcerated people look forward to the day when they walk out of the prison gates, happy, excited, and anxious to get on with their lives. I wish it were that simple. Oklahoma law books still state, "upon release, all convicts shall be issued a horse and a gun." In my opinion, this should still be in effect, as I would have mounted up and rode like hell. As for the gun, oh well, convicted felons cannot own one. We can no longer vote either, but we still have to pay taxes; go figure.

My first stop on the road to freedom was the Probation and Parole office. A lot of technical jargon was read to us (me and about 30 other scared witless ex-offenders, male and female, provided they bothered to show). Some of the repeat offenders knew what to expect and chose, in self defense, not to show up at all.

First, they read off the rules and regulations, much like the riot act, then had everyone sign on the dotted line that we understood what was to be expected of us. It was much like being incarcerated; the only difference being that you now had a new address and were required to work for a slight increase from state pay. It went something like this:

1.) Abstain from alcohol, drugs, and people who use them; be a loner.
2.) Do not frequent establishments that serve alcohol, allow gambling (Bingo included) or places where disreputable people frequent; stay home.
3.) Obtain gainful employment; good luck!
4.) Report to Parole office when required, pay monthly fees, submit to constant drug testing, and continual degradation, humiliation, and cross examination. In other words, be ready to have all your thoughts, ideas, plans, and goals destroyed.

In my particular instance, my husband is an ex-offender, discharged in 1990, and has gone on with his life to be a good role model for other inmates. He obtained a D.O.C. volunteer badge (legally), and worked hard at establishing respectability and credibility. My parole officer then set out on a one woman crusade to destroy me, him, and our marriage as soon as we hit town. My husband was an old client of hers and she believed he could not have possibly changed from the violent person he was years ago. She claimed, "Once violent, always violent."

She disapproved of our marriage from the beginning. She tried several times to get a court order to remove me from the household and probably would have succeeded had we not been legally married. She used threats, coercion, and finally had me re-incarcerated on a bogus misconduct. One of the sanctions on my 02-2 was 1-30 days in a correctional facility, and I was to be returned to my parole district when the thirty days was completed. It was a trap. Irene knew what she was doing by placing me back in the system. She knew I would be

"stuck like Chuck" with all of the freezes the Governor had placed on violent crimes and early release programs.

Did I break any of the rules and conditions of my pre-parole? The answer is yes; I drank. I also attended AA, graduated MRT, went through twenty eight days of TADD (which she saw fit to send me to in case the parole board put it down as a parole stipulation; just in case, mind you). This also cost me my job. I was doing everything in my power to pacify this woman, and yet, she constantly badgered me, making sure my self-esteem stayed at an all time low. She lorded her position over me and treated me as if it were beneath her to speak to me. I always felt dirty and violated when I was in her presence, especially after she left my home.

My officer had a wall full of certificates for one thing or another, yet I failed to read any that specified her having a doctorate in marriage counseling or psychiatry. I have been diagnosed with clinical depression by a certified psychiatrist after just six months of weekly visits to this woman. I feel that my health and well being were in jeopardy as a result of this unfeeling, uncaring, vicious, vindictive, public servant, "Sworn to Serve and Protect." So...who is the victim?

Don't get me wrong, I'm sure there are some good people that work for P&P, and I don't mean to stereotype anyone as a group. I was unfortunate to draw a bad hand and had to play with the cards I was dealt. I'm not placing any blame on anyone either. What happened, happened. Although I probably could have handled things differently if I would have prepared myself mentally for the traps on the outside like I did for the traps on the inside. As the saying goes, "You can trick off your own time."

CASE STUDY: SIX MONTHS IN THE LIFE OF A FEMALE PAROLEE

by Leah Mueller

May 9, "95" is the day I got out of prison. It's 12:00 noon. The air smelled fresher than it ever has before, my smile's not fake. I can use the bathroom behind closed doors. I get home, my kids are there, I felt like 1000 pounds had been lifted. But I knew there was lots of work to be done. Front and back yard the grass was knee high, my garage had piled full of junk, half of it full. Outside of the house needed painted, so I set to work.

I'm scared again, so much to do. I had "need-to-do's", "supposed-to-do's", "have-to-do's", and "want-to-do's". Three hours home, mowing the grass, sunburnt, sweaty, tired. I wanted a beer. Instead, I have iced tea. My parole officer drives up, my kids come to get me. I let her in. First thing she asks, "Why do you have bags of beer and pop cans out front," she walks to the kitchen between the fridge and stove, waste basket has nothing but Sharps cans and pop cans in it. I explain to her that my children walk the neighborhood and collect cans for going skating, swimming, etc...for extra spending money. She tells me, "Ms. Mueller, you know there is not supposed to be alcoholic beverages in or near your house and I can take you back right now for this." I was floored, I started to cry, then I got mad. "Where does it say kids can't take some responsibility?" I told her. I thought it was pretty good that a 7 and 9 year old would take it upon themselves to make money and not expect Mom or Grandma to hand them money at the drop of a dime. So I apologized and told her we would get rid of them and we would find some place else for them to stash it.

I went to sleep that night totally drained, but I couldn't wait to wake up and see my kid's faces, make them breakfast, get them dressed, to make sure this was actually real.

Okay, it's time to find a job. I don't have a car, even if I knew the bus route and time schedule, I had no money to take it. I had to be home when the kid's got home. Another problem is that all I've ever done was bartend, dance, or odd jobs such as carpentry. I had no license, I had no car. So I guess it's a fast food place, but finding one will be hard. Living on that, confused, scared for my freedom, I put in applications to the places nearest my house. I guess I walked about six miles in the afternoon heat. Managers saw me with sweat pouring down my face, make-up smeared, wet arm pits, wind blown hair. I have no transportation and I just got out of prison, single mother with two children and I have a 7TH grade education. Not a very good candidate for a job. I get home one hour 'til the kids will be home, after school snack, get them out of school

clothes, help them with homework, they want to play. Already I've had a bad day. Sorry kids, I have to stay home. I'm not allowed to leave past the yard. But they want to go to the park. They haven't seen much of me in seven months. I try to explain, they don't understand, I start crying, I'm not free at all. I have a chain around my neck, I can't breathe. I love them so much, they don't understand. I haven't been home for two whole days, already I feel like my world is falling apart. The only thing that I think is I'm glad this day is almost over. I wake up, it's a new day. I don't want to leave cause I might get a call for an interview. But my itinerary says I have to be gone by 7:30 A.M. I'm not allowed to have an answering machine, besides the fact that I won't know if anyone has called, I don't have anyplace else to look for a job, already my nerves are shot. So I leave the house, roam around aimlessly. I go to the book store around the corner, nothing interesting, I walk my neighborhood, wonder what I'm going to do next. My mind turns circles. I decide to try myself with an old friend, she lives a few blocks up the road. She's home of course with a Budweiser in her hand. I don't stay long. Someone's coming over with my all time favorite, crank. I don't think I can say no to that, and she's not much of a friend if she can't tell this person to come over later. Then I think, "Oh, great! Everyone I grew up around and know drinks or does drugs, now I really feel alone." I have to start all over again, I don't know how to communicate with straight people. I can't leave town or move from my neighborhood. I've lived in Tulsa all my life, camping, parks, bars, pool halls is all I know. I can't go anywhere that I won't see someone I know. I decide to walk to school, have lunch with my kids. It really surprised them. They showed me off to their friends. My heart feels warm tears want to fall. I thank God they sure love me. I can't ever leave them again, no matter what. I have to make it work. But how is the question?

I call my parole officer and tell her I'm going home early and make some calls and find a place where there is NA meetings close by. She said, "Okay, but don't make a habit of it and don't leave the house for the rest of the night and remember, you never know when I'll stop by." That burnt my butt, she treated me like I'm on parole for killing someone. Anyway, the rest of the week it's about the same thing. I finally got a call for a job interview. This is good. It's walking distance (a mile). Little restaurant. I go talk to the owner, he only needs me part time at $2.17 an hour plus tips. I did okay for a couple of weeks except Saturday and Sunday which took all my tips for a baby sitter which wasn't much. Tips were bad so I would owe out of my check. Plus they needed school clothes, supplies. My phone bill was due. Parole officer wanted to know if I paid on my fines. I asked her to give me a few weeks. I gave her some receipts and told her it's costing me more to work than what I make. "Well," she says, "you need to cut back on something." I didn't know what to say to her. I couldn't believe these people could be so cold. I quit my job. I couldn't handle working my butt off for nothing. Plus the boss had a thing for me. My parole officer didn't like that much. But she gave me another week to find another job. In the meantime I

do my NA twice that week. I luck out, get a job at Denny's, but the only opening was the 11:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. shift. She okays it but once again I need a babysitter, but now while they're at school, I sleep. I have a couple of hours with them. Still at the house cause I'm wearing a monitor, can't go anywhere. I go to work, $2.73 an hour and you don't get much business graveyard shift and if you do it's all the drunks coming from the bar at 2:00 in the morning. They're belligerent, out of money, so they get the special, get mad because the cook doesn't get their order the way they want it so it gets blamed on the waitress, of course. They leave a penny and raise a stink on the way out, usually take a glass or ashtray, salt and pepper shaker. A month of this I feel the urge to beat someone stupid. My bills are behind. I've given the parole officer $20, paid $20 on my fines, yeah, just eight thousand to go. My kid's are complaining I don't see them enough. They said I'm asleep all the time and the babysitter yells all the time, "makes us stay in our room when she has her boyfriend come over." Okay, she's fired. My check from Denny's consists of $70 a week, it's not working out. I quit my job, instead of going to work that night I go to the bar. Drink a few beers play pool. I sit in a corner all by myself. What am I doing? I'm tired of being isolated in the house, I have no friends. I feel like screwing up on purpose so I can go back to prison. I'm lost in this big world with no where to go and no way to get there. I leave the bar, walk home, take a long bath, crawl into bed. Lay on my stomach, can't go to sleep. Now what are you going to do? You quit your job, you drank some beer, the parole officer will find out. I lay on my side, that doesn't work, I turn over. Okay is this how it's going to be until I discharge? I get up and go to the kitchen, write some letters. I can do some cleaning in the garage. It's daylight now, get the kids off to school. The phone rings, it's my parole officer, she wants to know why I was home so early. "Because I quit my job," I told her and she says, "I think you need to come in so we can talk." I tell her okay.

I get dressed, my stomach is sick. I hate this feeling every time it is time to see her I get butterflies, feel like I'm going to be sick. She rides me very bad when I go in, warns me she can yank my chain at any time. I go in the office, sit down she is asking me why I quit my job and that she is real close to calling her superiors. I tell her that I am not making enough money to keep my head above water. I am so tired of having to work my schedule around an itinerary, when I have to let you know where I'll be at every moment of the day. I don't know how long it's going to take me at the grocery store and I have to make many trips, seeing as I have to take the bus; or the laundry, that's a pain, unloading and loading, getting the kids to the dentist appointments, doctors, etc. I go to PTA meeting, NA meetings, I have to pay someone to watch the kids, some days it takes me five or six hours to get from place to place on the bus. I'm crying now and I vomit on her floor. She got pissed off and told me I was too dramatic and to get out of her office and told me that I needed to get another job, keep it, or I'm going back

I go home, sit in my bedroom first, laugh at the look on her face when I got sick. The next couple of days I stay home, run it over and over in my head on what I'm going to do. I need to have a car. I'm not supposed to drive. I need a decent job, my electricity is getting turned off in two weeks. I make a few phone calls to some old friends. There is nothing else for me to do, either get some money together, pay my fines or fees and bills or I'm done for. I look in the mirror and turn away, I look sick. I get a hold of a friend that says I can work for him. It won't be much but he will come pick me up for work, take me home, pay me with a check and write out a time sheet for me. I told him great but I had to call my parole officer and ask permission. So, I call and tell her I got a job with Tulsa Tree Service and told her what he could do for me. She reluctantly says okay.

The first few weeks were okay but business wasn't real good and I told him I needed more work, so I asked him to arrange a favor and he did. I got a job at the bar I used to work at for $5 an hour, plus tips which ran around $50 - $80 dollars a day, all in cash. So I made anywhere from $90 - $120 a day in cash. This worked out good. The new boss would write me out a time sheet and I would give him cash and he would write me out a paycheck. I did this for two months. everything was going smoothly except I was always nervous, afraid someone that didn't care for me much, would turn me in, or one of the officers that knew I was on probation would come in and do a license check and catch me there. So I stopped working there, took the money that I had, went and bought an old car, went to an old dope connection, bought my product and went to work. I still had my friend writing me a time sheet and giving me a paycheck, when I gave him cash. I was relieved to be able to go to my NA meeting, to the grocery store, laundromat in half the time it took me to do it on the bus. I was able to pick the kids up from school. It would be about two hours before I was supposed to be in from work. I would take them to a movie or shopping. I had the money now to take them to get nice school clothes instead of thrift store clothes. It's hard to explain, I felt almost normal again. I slept at night, I wasn't short with my kids, I had more time with them. I was on time to my parole officers place, but it all finally caught up with me. A friend of mine evidently got busted, got off with a promise that she would get someone bigger busted. She wore a wire to my house one evening. I was under surveillance for the next two months and one night they kicked in my door. I was arrested. I now have 18 thousand dollars in fines. My kids are staying with my grandmother. She works two jobs, has no time for the kids. They feel abandoned. They're not doing well in school anymore, running away, stealing. They hate the cops for taking Mom away from them, and when I get out I will be in the same predicament I was in before, just higher fines to pay. I'm afraid that my life is going to end and I will never have a chance to bring my kids up without the system breathing down my neck. I lay in bed at night now, thinking about what I've done, everything that's happened to me in the past and how I can better myself. I got my GED but that's not going to land me a good job, a car, my pride, or my kids confidence that I won't ever leave them again.

CASE STUDY: ANOTHER ENTRY IN THE JOURNAL OF A RECOVERING ADDICT - MAY '96

by Michelle Pierre

People invent their own memories, and the past has an unruly life of it's own. Each generation must tacitly agree to remember certain things--certain ways; and refuse to be dissuaded different from it's chosen version of the past. If we are not vigilant about preserving our own history, someone will always come along and try to correct our memories; thus, how will we know who we were, or who we are now? I've found that most people like to believe that they are different from their cohorts - peers; but through AA and 12-step programs, I have learned to see the group in the individual, the common experiences of each generation, in the idiosyncrasies of a particular person.

Professionally, I wore killer keels, dangling earrings, tight jeans, silk shirts, and linen blazers to work in; while the only difference in my ensemble at school would be in footwear, combat boots. Whether at school, church, work, or play: these were seen as stages on which I felt required to perform. A different role was expected of me, like different masks; and as a perfectionist, excelling was all the more important in each role. I walked in a way that blew my hair away from my face, shoulders back and head held high (as if I were going someplace, my dad would say), and puckered my clothing in strategic places. I always carried a large shoulder-bag purse that held everything, prepared for "Let's Make A Deal."

Often in college, my room-mate, Beverly, and I would arrive at ticket counters at Tulsa Airport, without any idea of an itinerary so that no one knew where to start looking for us. I continue this sort of illusive behavior whenever involved with a new lover or boyfriend. Despite rumors of dangers, we tanned as much of ourselves as feasible for as long a time as possible. Tanning beds and memberships were as numerous as the different friends and their locations were. We often found it handy to have more than one membership, as they would only allow us to tan for certain lengths of time for safety reasons. We were into sex on location. Grateful Dead, Commander Cody, Doobie Brothers, Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young, Gregg Alman, Little Feat, "30-Days In The Hole," "Needle and the Damage Done," and "Dark Side of the Moon" were songs and groups we played over and over and over...24/7 on 8-track tapes and albums.

Losing my virginity in college, I soon learned to sleep with men whenever I felt like it or because of insomnia, the need for intimacy (my parents and family lived up north), an old grudge, or the inability to say no. I used sleeping with men, sexuality, as "instant gratification" for all my unfocused anxieties that I couldn't even begin to put into words.

After several years of college, never finishing my degree and at the insistence of my brother and brother-in-law, I left NSU only to embrace marriage with idealistic views

and expectations. Marriage allowed me to abuse myself even further, unknowingly antagonize my husband, ruin my career in the oil field, and eventually spoil my son.

I have squandered my expensive uncompleted education, mishandled my career, and toyed recklessly with the few talents I have. I have spent many years destroying the "temple" I was given at birth and I am overwhelmed at the "remodelers fees and time" it shall take to reshape me. I often look at it as an impossible feat in duration, only to have to divide it up into short-term goals to make it achievable and not so discouraging. "Keep it simple sweetheart" and "One day at a time" are key phrases here.

I try to stay busy making good use of my time as I am rather regretful and resentful of all the time I have lost due to my addiction. Time has grown to be more precious than gold itself and more rare than platinum in jewelry today. I reluctantly find myself playing the same old video tapes over and over, growing stagnant.

Now that I've found sobriety, spirituality, and that all my brain cells aren't dead, I'm scared that I won't have the opportunity to pursue it long enough and fast enough in the real world. Dr. Davis said he was afraid of not being able to read all the books that he's bought...I'm afraid that my sight will go beyond repair, much like my hearing, and I won't be able to read the books I want to read. My fingers swell from arthritis, leaving me again afraid, unable to type, drive, work, or even complete my new series, "As In All Rarity, There Is Great Value."

Moreover, I find myself cautiously wondering, hesitantly speculating, if I'll be able to achieve financial stability, meaningful work, a snowballs chance in hell to make amends to my father, and reborn with my son. I know his chances of coming to prison are high.

Mr. Murphy has been kind enough to let me tutor. It's more for my benefit than for the students. I have this internal burning desire to be of use, to grow, to learn, and I am afraid I am going to die before most of this is accomplished, thus dying unfulfilled.

The tutors here are very territorial and are unsure of me altogether. I'm not trying to take over. I just want to help out. I know I can be of some use to someone. Additionally, as overcrowded as we are, and short-handed with tutors, I just want to help relieve some of the pressure.

One student thought I was dumb because I couldn't give the definition of a "prime number," yet, neither could she! I find it hard to even focus on the screen and see what it says as my contacts dried out and cracked at Mabel's (Mabel Bassett Correctional Center - maximum security facility for women). The good Lord only knows when I will be able to pay for an eye examination again, much less the lenses. Now that I have the desire, I have no means.

I've been tutoring a friend of mine who is very dear to me. I wanted to cry when I found she couldn't even figure how much her pay check would be before taxes. She kept trying to tell me she didn't know how to multiply, and I kept insisting she must as she was doing division problems. Come to find out, she used a cheat sheet, as I call it, a multiplication chart. I've taught several women here how to do math by various methods, most of which are most unconventional and would never be allowed in "real

schools."

I believe you have to reach the student by whatever means is available, no matter how unorthodox. One of my favorite students didn't realize she knew how to do fractions until we started talkin' 8-balls and ¼-ounces, cost, and profits. Now she loves math and has obtained her GED.

I see my friends "need to learn," and the format I would select is different than one she was working. Sometimes we need to regroup, redefine, and re-evaluate. Also, I believe that quite often those who are on the outside looking in have a better perspective; can't see the forest for the trees type thing. I'm not saying one way or the other is wrong. My perception of her needs is merely different.

I believe in quality, not quantity. And yet, I find both perceptions of equal value. I believe in mastering multiplication before attempting division, especially when it's with an adult who perhaps has low self-esteem and many insecurities that stem from a dysfunctional life. I praise her as incessantly as she denies her capabilities. I love her as a friend, a baby in Christ. Mr. Murphy is an outstanding teacher. I rate him right up there with Ms. Cloud and Dr. Davis, although each is unique in their own distinctive way. Ms. Dotson is another I admire, although I have not been fortunate enough to work around her. Mrs. Harrison has lasted...I didn't think she would. She's quite a tuff little cookie, as my dad would say. I'm proud of her for hanging in there.

Education, the building in itself, is my solitude, my escape from prison. I find the staff amiable, as opposed to, well, other staff on the compound. I don't know why inmates are so surprised at this, it's really very logical. Teachers are educated, and educated people are intelligent; therefore, less likely to show unjust prejudices. In short, although limited in some areas simply because they are human, they are not ignorant, nor do they put on aires and pretend to know something that they don't. I love educated people! I love learning! The older I get, the less I realize I know.

As a young woman in the early '70's, my roomies and peers had numerous abortions obtaining serious infections, severe bleeding, blood clotting, and high fevers resulting from sloppy, backroom, unsanitary procedures. We used abortions as a sort of sick birth control. Half hoping next time would be different, we would have the courage to keep it, regardless of our parents feelings. As years passed, we found ourselves going to "pre-term" clinics by Utica Square, then rewarded our obedience with expensive lunches and a new wardrobe; things hadn't changed!

Looking back, I find that few of my peers had more than one child, as I do, and more than one was most likely to be by different daddies. I prayed for a son rather than a daughter. I didn't want a child of mine to experience the same "self-inflicted" pain I had endured from poor choices I just wanted to be loved, that's all. Mom and Dad were born in the depression, my brother and sister dancing in the early sixties, and I joined them in the Flower Power, Make Love, Not War days. Peace, love, and dope days! Seinsemelia and Afghanistan! How simple, yet complicated, life was. Mom and Dad found it easier to discuss oral sex than their annual income. A norm for those raised in the depression era.

We disregarded all warnings and used birth control pills (those of us who used it), cigarettes, Valium, Quaaludes, and liquor all at the same time! I was such a well accomplished addict! How sickening! My how my roomies, cousins, aunts, Mom, and myself liked bird eggs, Adipex P's. Although we were all slim and petite, we wanted there to be space-to-see between our thighs!

Most of my old colleagues, as well as myself, went through a rather wide variety of treatments and 12-step programs, had our heads shrunk, and are now beginning to have our faces and bodies lifted, again, in a wide variety of ways. Additionally as an addict, as well as a perfectionist and overachiever, I had great difficulty maintaining a job for long periods of time since they required regular attendance. I found that the only kind of job I cared to have was self-employment, allotting me "instant gratification" for work well done.

Writing now serves dual purposes, a release of tension, as well as occupying my time, for there isn't really anyone here for me to talk to. I don't really have anything in particular to say, nothing of importance. Just things I think about, internalize, and ponder over as I try to analyze and redefine my life and goals. I was sort of hoping that by tutoring I'd want to go back to school and finish my teaching degree, but that's not "it." I don't know what "it" is, but I need to discover "it," as I'm growing weary of looking for it. And as a perfectionist, I need to find it quickly so I can try to perfect it! I'm getting old!

My life, at times, hasn't had much structure. Writing entries in a journal, sometimes letters, about current circumstances is a way I let myself know of the current circumstances in my life; therefore, enabling me to stay focused better. I woke up last night at 2:00 A.M. and I couldn't go back to sleep. Sometimes, God wakes me up and wants me to pray for someone, although I seldom know who.

Nevertheless, I began with the Serenity Prayer, proceeding on to the Lord's Prayer, the Magnificent, a few Hail Mary's, intercessions for those I know, as well as those I don't know, the General Confession, General Thanksgiving, ending in specific prayers of thanks...I'm thankful I'm sober, a volunteer tutor, that Mr. Murphy would have me, that Dr. Davis trusts me. I'm thankful for my father and son, that they still will talk to me and love me. Most of all, I'm thankful for my spirituality! How did I ever lose it? It's not like I hadn't had it before! God is so good!

I'm glad everything has happened to me like it has, the bad and the good. I'm a combination of all that has happened to me, all that I've seen, the different environments I've lived in since birth. I like who I am, although I'm not what I want to be. I have no regrets today. God is going to use everything that has happened to me to his glory, and I'm not talking about when I'm dead and gone. God uses me right now! There is no long distance charges when I talk to Him. He's in the here and now! He's sitting right here with me as I type this, yet, He's already at the dorm waiting on me! Awesome!

Although these words would appear nonsense to others, it means a lot to me to be trusted and allowed to vent my feelings on a computer. I see Mr. Murphy in colors of sherbet, orange sherbet, lime, strawberry, radical raspberry, boysenberry, cherry,

and lemon. He's fair with his students, tutors, and patient with me. I was embarrassed that I had forgotten so many things on the computer. I feel like a virgin. He didn't embarrass me though, he calmly showed me how to get in.

Dr. Davis is colors of crimson, rusts, red oranges, with navy blue. He reminds me of my father. In Daily Living Skills, I drink in his lectures and swallow them down my throat as he squelches my thirst for knowledge, momentarily. Dr. Davis is "real." He allows us to see into his life by opening up and sharing with us. I can relate to him in many ways. My father was a priest, my sainted mother, dead. I'm like his daughter in many aspects. I share many of the same poor choices. My father is now raising my son, Michael, who is all the world to him.

I was raised that God comes first, then family, then work. My father mixes work in before family quite often, thus robbing us of much needed time; when I was growing up and now with my son. I can understand it. It would be confusing. God is his "work." I feel that God compensates me for the time taken from me by my father. Mine is a great, mighty, and loving God. He is a father to the fatherless. I know that God will take care of me while dad does His work.

I miss mom. Last night after I prayed, a song came into my head for no particular reason. "Oh, little playmate, come out and play with me, and bring your dollies three, climb up my apple tree, look down my rain barrel, slide down my cellar door, and we'll be jolly friends for ever more." I miss mama. We were jolly friends...until the day she died.

I owed a debt I couldn't pay, so Jesus paid a debt I didn't owe so I might believe, and have everlasting life. In the span of eternity, I'll only be here for a short time. I must stay focused and keep my priorities in order. I'm missing Mikey, Pa, and Mama something awful. How I wish I could only hug Mama one more time, just for a minute.

Mama touched each of us, as best she could, often and with great tenderness. Mama held me close and stroked my brow, protected me, Mike, and sis from all harm that might befall us, as well as all the imaginary ones. Although the world changed constantly around us, Mama and Daddy always remained consistent. I always knew in the end, no matter what may befall me, they would always be there. I called them Mom, Mama, Dad, and Daddy until I became appalled. I then would address them as Mother or Father while rolling my eyes simultaneously.

On occasions, although rare, Mom would become embroiled in her own problems, or Dad acted "less than perfect." But I rarely ever doubted the permanence and security in my relationship with them, except when I first came to prison. Security, family, home, love, unconditional acceptance, well, that revolved around their very presence, that was their very essence in some respects. I took them to the edge and back again. I can't believe that I've been robbed of the only person who accepted me without restraint despite all the cracks in "this cosmic egg." I'm scared at times that I've lost my Daddy as well, and he hasn't even died yet. I love him so. Mama and Daddy didn't always have to understand me. They just had to be there.

How many of the world's prayers have gone unanswered, simply because those who prayed did not endure to the end

# CONCLUSION:
# FINAL THOUGHTS

The previous chapters have provided you with the tools to analyze and understand the innate problems that afflict the correctional system. It is obvious that the system doesn't work. The question that follows is not how to fix it because that will be a long time in coming. If you're sitting around waiting for the correctional system to get fixed, then you will be sorely disappointed. What you must do is adapt, change, and learn to cope with and manage chaos. If this problem was confined to one state, then a quick fix could possibly be expected. This anomaly, however, is not only a national problem, but also an international concern.

We never seem to address the root cause of most crime and it's ever present companion, dope. In some studies, dope is either directly or indirectly responsible for 85% of all criminal activity. If these studies are true, why then are our prison systems so bereft of programs that address this problem? Most incarcerated individuals were either using, dealing, and/or stealing so they could use. If you are one of these individuals, then look in the mirror. The only salvation headed your way will be the result of what you, and you alone, do for yourself. It's like the old gospel song my mother used to sing in church called "Lonesome Valley." The words are very prophetic where you're concerned. They go like this, "You've got to walk that lonesome valley, you've got to go there by yourself. There's no one else can go there for you. You've got to go there for yourself." As an incarcerated female, this walk through the correctional system is one that not only you must do, but you must do it all by and for yourself. Will it be easy? No. Can you do it? Yes. Just take that God given brain and reach way down deep inside yourself and take control of that part of yourself that is not controlled by the state, which is your spirit and your soul. You must become your own "do it yourself" project. Call it: Project You. Your own future is going to be a result of choices you make in the early days of your incarceration. Don't get caught up in the yard bird mentality and yard bird games. Self control and responsibility is the only road back to normality and sanity. If you can control these two areas of your life in the unreal world of prison life, then surely when you get out, the odds will be in your favor for a change.

The scripture in Proverbs 29 says that "Where there is no vision the people perish." You must visualize yourself to be a different person than the one that warped off out there and did something stupid. Actually get a vision of your future life and your accomplishments and dream it to reality. If you don't have a picture in your mind of where you're going and how you're going to get there, then you will never find your way out of the morass of incarceration and recidivism. Without your road map to the future, you will wander aimlessly

through your life with no goals, direction, or vision. Yard bird-itis is curable. Choose to soar with the eagles rather than scratching around the "hood" in the human refuse pile for the rest of your life. Seize the opportunity, seize the chance, and seize the day! Grab life by the throat and refuse to turn it loose until you've wrested from it the reality of your vision.

You know how to lose. You know how to take an "ass kickin'." The question is, however, do you know how to win? Can you accept small successes and accomplishments and then build on them until they become big successes and huge accomplishments? Winning and success can become as natural to you as losing and the constant mistakes that have been a part of your past. It's a matter of positive thinking, positive associates, and a positive vision. Just as surely as your negative past was created from a negative vision, so then can your positive vision create a positive future. Pursue knowledge and be that "one-eyed man in the land of the blind" that knew where he/she was going. That is the question you must ask of yourself and answer. Where are you going? Where do you really want to go and what do you want to be? Answer that question and your chances of accomplishing this task will be greatly enhanced. Quit throwing away your opportunities and your life with both hands like there is no tomorrow. There is a tomorrow and it can be one of hope, love, and opportunity. It can also be one of despair, loneliness, fear, and anger. What do you choose? Choose a life. Get a life.

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